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COMMONWEAL

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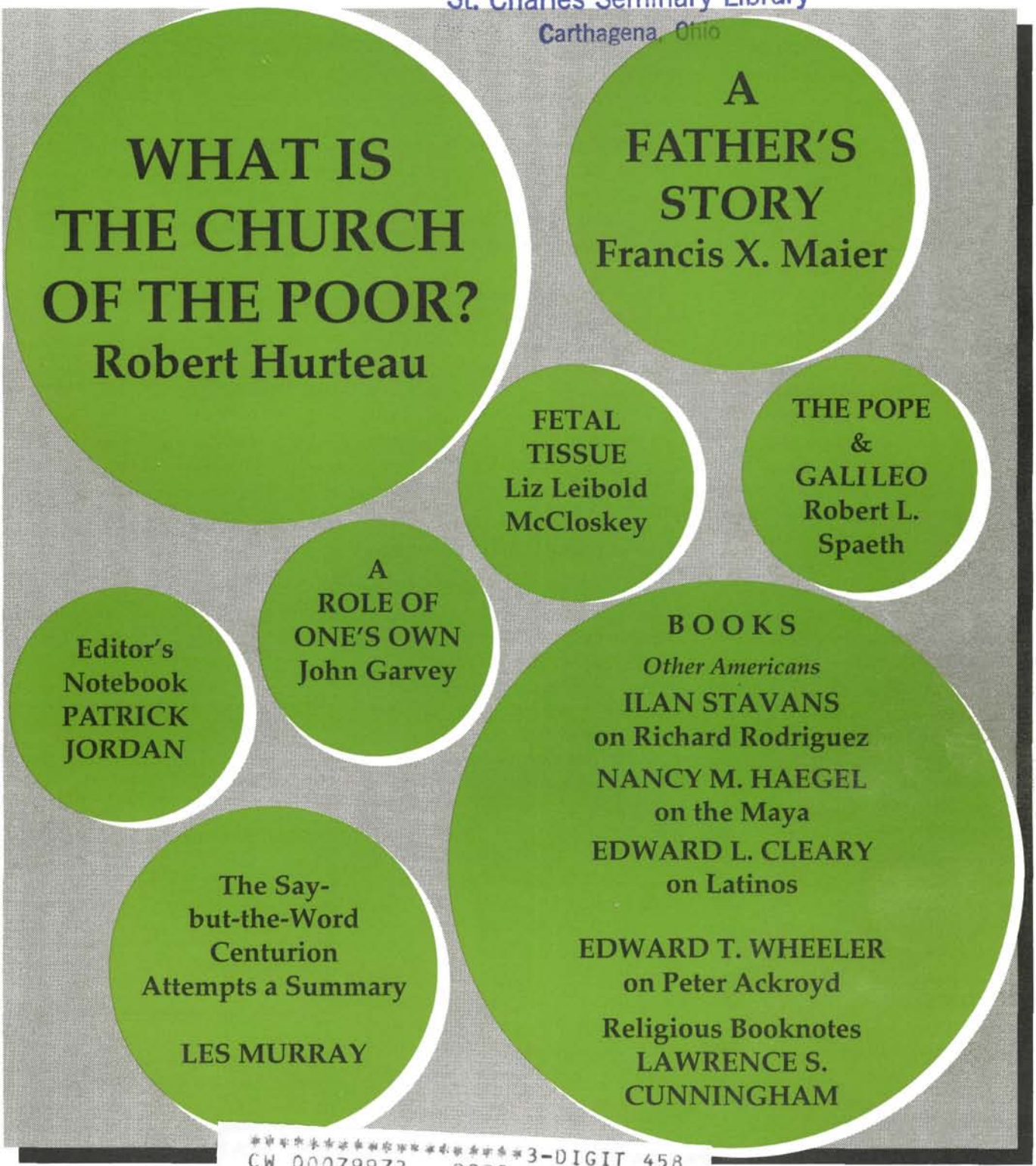

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CORRESPONDENCE

Close reader in pain

St. Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: I have come to expect thoughtful and well-written commentary from you and usually you come through. But FLAUNT for FLOUT (p. 4) and CIVILTÁ for CIVILTÀ (pp. 9ff.) in your issue of February 12? Ouch!

DAN SCHLAFLY

A cry from the gut

Arlington, Va.

To the Editors: In the course of urging Catholic colleges to maintain the religious impulse that got them started, David R. Carlin, Jr. poses the underlying question: "Will American Catholics remain distinctively Catholic, or will they be *swallowed up* [emphasis added] by the secularized culture that surrounds them?" ["From Ghetto to Hilltop," February 12].

Nobody can see the future, but I think we can assume that American Catholics will continue to want, among other things:

- To choose their political leaders in democratic elections;
- To choose what goods and services they purchase from among competing vendors in an open marketplace;
- To get information on public issues from a diversity of nongovernmental sources; and
- To choose whom they will marry, how many children they will have, and what schools their children will attend.

Such freedoms to choose, once available to few, seem to us today to fit so well the human nature God created that any possibility of their absence would be widely regarded—at least among the citizens of the industrial democracies—as less than civilized. *Freedom to choose among alternatives* is perhaps the most elemental characteristic of our daily lives—Mr. Carlin's included.

Having experienced this culture of freedom, I don't see how I would want to live any other way. But, in the process, I clearly do risk losing allegiance to an institution which relies, for the crucial function of choosing its leadership, on the private, unaccountable judgments of a small number of self-perpetuating male hierarchs; and develops its position on moral questions by means of private interpretation of a traditional magisterium which only the members of this elite group are eligible to construe with authority.

These characteristics define an institution which tends not to place the trust in the exercise of human freedom *throughout the community* that so pervades the broader culture.

I may already have been "swallowed up." Would Mr. Carlin have any suggestions on getting unswallowed?

JOHN GALLIVAN

Our ex-Catholic schools

Houston, Tex.

To the Editors: Thanks for David R. Carlin's column on the de-Catholicizing of Catholic colleges. My experience confirms his thesis. After attending the law school of the University of San Francisco, run by the Jesuits, I earned my master's and doctoral degrees in law at the University of California at Berkeley. There was absolutely no difference in intellectual content, emphasis, or orientation except that Berkeley's profs were better known and had published more.

I asked Father John J. LoSchiavo, then president of USF, about this. If there wasn't a dime's worth of difference between USF and Cal Berkeley, why importune hardworking Catholics to support a separate law school? I asked another delicate question: Why was the faculty of the USF law school 65 percent Jewish and about 10 percent Catholic? We must be ecumenical and perhaps welcome even some academically qualified atheists and agnostics. But 65 percent Jewish? That's absurd. You can bet your last bagel that Yeshiva University has no such proportion. They know they are Jewish, they are proud to be Jewish, they are committed to Jewish scholarship, and that is reflected in the make-up of the faculty.

The church had canon and Roman law a thousand years before Harvard ever came to be; its tradition has much to give to the law. But as it is there is nothing specifically Catholic or even Christian in our law schools. Like the secular schools, they teach the same nonsense that got us into the American legal rut: law is everywhere present but nowhere effective because it lacks any form of moral mooring. So why support law schools whose product can be gotten at any secular university, in most cases at much lower cost for students and alumni alike? Reform them or get rid of them.

By the way, Father LoSchiavo never answered my questions. PETER J. RIGA

Carlin on target

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: David Carlin's "From Hilltop to Ghetto" is topnotch. As a graduate of a Catholic college and father of progeny who have attended three Catholic

(Continued on page 30)

CORRECTION Because of an editing error, the title given for Andrew Hudgins's poetry collection reviewed in the February 26 *Commonweal* was incorrect. The correct title is: *The Never-Ending: New Poems* (Houghton Mifflin).

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COMMONWEAL

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No right choice

There are no easy answers to the continuing carnage in Bosnia. That tragic fact has been clear for some time. But can it be that there are no answers at all? The current effort at the United Nations in New York to end the fighting in Bosnia is caught up in a miasma of Serb maneuvers and Muslim anxieties. Diplomatic negotiations wax and wane around the Vance-Owen plan for the ethnic partition of Bosnia, which, if successfully negotiated, would provide the occasion for sending a major military force under the auspices of the United Nations and the command of NATO.

Only the Bosnian Croats have signed onto the plan, but then they have little to lose and much to gain from the decentralization of Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs refuse to accept the plan because, among other reasons, they would be required to cede territory they now occupy. The Bosnian Muslims resist because, in effect, the partition of the country by ethnic zoning would mean the end of the sovereign and multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina in which they form the single largest group. Of course, no small part of their foot-dragging has rested on the hope that the United States will rescue them from their tragic dilemma.

The Muslims must choose between continued shelling and ethnic cleansing by the Serbs and becoming a rump state with little economic or geographical cohesion. For if the partitioned Bosnia-Herzegovnia devised by Vance-Owen, once established, were to fail, which is very possible, the Serbs and Croats would simply take their provinces and merge them with Serbia and Croatia. So even were they to agree to the Vance-Owen plan, the Bosnian Muslims, with only three provinces, would be left without a contiguous territory and continue an easy prey to the voracious Serbs. For Bosnia's political leaders, therefore, there hardly appears to be even the neat choice between the lesser of two evils.

In pressing for further negotiations under Vance-Owen, President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia put the matter this way to his fellow Bosnians (who are, let us remember, not only Muslims, but those Bosnian Croats and Serbs who support an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina): "I cannot sacrifice my people for the sake of saving the country. But by saving my people, I believe we can eventually save the country. We could decide to fight on for the sake of the country, but then we might not have people to live in it."

Only a multilateral effort is appropriate. But only the United States has the leverage and the will to save the Bosnians from this terrible choice of defeat and death now or attrition and extinction later. But that choice too presents its own dilemmas. Effective intervention will require a long-term and patient commitment to establishing peace and then maintaining it. This sounds suspiciously like a quagmire and the Clinton administration will want none of it; it is searching for

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a way in that can also provide an easy way out. But there may be none such, and it would be prudent to acknowledge from the start that a deployment of larger forces is a very high-risk and long-term operation.

But after initially rejecting the Vance-Owen plan, the Clinton administration has now realized that, yes, it *is* a bad idea—except for all of the others, including the idea of doing nothing. If the Muslims and Serbs agree to it, the plan will be the vehicle for sending an enlarged UN force; a force of between 50,000 and 150,000 troops, including 20,000 Americans, has been suggested. This enlarged force will have duties broader than the current contingent of UN peacekeeping troops whose want of enforcement powers is in danger of making them as much a part of the problem in Bosnia as they once seemed to be part of the solution.

The new enlarged force under the command of NATO and, not coincidentally, of an American general, will have the authority not only to enforce a cease fire by military means, but as well to monitor and maintain the conditions of the Vance-Owen plan itself. This means not only lifting the siege of Sarajevo and other cities and towns, but taking back territory from the Serbs. All-out war with the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia itself is a real risk, probably the primary risk of this operation. But there is a second risk. The Muslims, who have clearly been the chief victims, may press to recover homes and villages that Serbs have seized and overrun. It will be tempting to help them. Thus our reading of the situation: that while the Vance-Owen Plan may provide an easy way in, there is not going to be an easy way out.

There is another alternative, one that has been steadily resisted by the Europeans, the United Nations, and the United States: Give the Bosnian Muslims the means to defend themselves; lift the sanctions and arm them. The objection is obvious: introducing more weaponry will only increase the carnage. But if the Vance-Owen plan should fail to be signed, the Serbs will continue the carnage on their own. If a UN force with American troops is not sent to defend Bosnia, then arms should be sent so that Bosnia can defend itself.

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

OVERCOME EVIL BY GOOD

EILEEN EGAN & HER ILK

One evening last September, I stopped uptown for a brief visit with Eileen Egan. Before her retirement from Catholic Relief Services several years back, she had worked for four decades with refugees in all the world's most troubled spots. A founding member of Pax Christi in this country, a longtime editor of the *Catholic Worker*, a biographer of Mother Teresa and a co-worker with her, Egan has spent her life caring for the victims of war and offering nonviolent ways of ending or easing various conflicts.

So it was no surprise that evening that Eileen would be talking about the need for an international team of peacemakers to bring relief supplies to the besieged Muslims in Bosnia. She was not proposing a well-financed or heavily armed convoy of participating governments, but a group of international volunteers, unprotected and unsecured by force of arms, who would have to be willing to face capture and even death, yet who would be strong enough internally and spiritually to carry on their humanitarian mission without the threat of responsive violence. She spoke of how the Israeli pilot Abie Nathan had repeatedly flown such airlifts into Biafra during that terrible civil conflict.

It was not a surprise to hear Eileen Egan talking this way. She is a lifelong adherent of Gandhian nonviolence. But I had imagined we'd probably talk about *other* things that evening, perhaps even her own recent mugging, experienced while she was on the way to evening Mass. After all, that was why I was visiting her in a hospital room, where she was recovering from a broken hip, head lacerations, and seven broken ribs. But Eileen's concerns were with the Bosnians, and unfortunately they still are. When Michael T. Kaufman wrote a piece about her recently for the *New York Times* (January 23), there was the Bosnian angle again: "You know," she told Kaufman, "after my operation there was not much pain; I had such wonderful care. But I kept thinking of all those people in Bosnia...dying of cold."

It hasn't been hard this Lent to come up with apocalyptic images on which to meditate: The standoff in Waco, Texas; the World Trade Center bombing; visions from Sudan, Somalia, and India; the Rodney King replay; the Haitian ferry disaster; the unrelenting, coldblooded cleansings in Bosnia....For me they have formed a sort of self-repeating tape, a Bruce Willis film spliced with scenes from Hieronymous Bosch. Yet despite that, I keep returning to my visit with Eileen Egan in the hospital: to her lack of despair, to her compassion.

Ten years ago this spring, the Catholic bishops of the U.S.—sinners all, like the rest of us—published *The Challenge of Peace*. Unlike some of those on the absolutist wing of the peace movement (or those on the realist extreme of the military-policy establishment), I felt then—and do now—the challenge of the bishops' letter, most keenly in their discussion about developing nonviolent means of conflict resolution. The bishops wrote that "nonviolence is not the way of the weak, the cowardly, or the impatient," and made it clear that "in its practice, the objective [of nonviolence] is not to avoid causing harm or injury to another creature, but, more positively, to seek the good of the other....Christ's own teachings and example provide a model way of life incorporating the truth, and a refusal to return evil for evil."

When I read these words I think of people like Eileen Egan and Alain Richard, a Franciscan at *Pace e Bene*, a nonviolent center in Las Vegas, Nevada. In the center's recent newsletter (*The Wolf*, Winter 1993), Richard asks why there was no non-

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violent army ready to step into Somalia: "First of all, the necessary logistics are difficult to mount," he writes, and "currently, traditional armies are the only ones which have the required logistical capacities." But deeper than the question of logistics, says Richard, is the question of how we think: "Our culture teaches us that only a physical power can stop another physical force from acting violently." But like the bishops' pastoral letter, Richard raises questions about this presumption and starts by providing a number of examples of recent nonviolent actions which successfully turned back violent, physical force. He mentions instances in Guatemala and Sri Lanka, in the Philippines and the former Soviet Union. But such actions were possible only where people were willing to put their own lives on the line: "Only through this way," concludes Richard, "can a new culture arise on the ashes of weapons and break the violent spiral of physical power."

For my part, that is a lot to think about this Lent. And the bishops' letter and Eileen Egan? I still find them challenging.

PATRICK JORDAN

REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

THE TISSUE ISSUE

TAKE IT SLOW ON FETAL TRANSPLANTS

What has always been true about politics is so true it's a truism: when the votes are counted, there are winners and losers. Ambivalence is little valued when the vote is taken and at the end of the day there is room only for unabashed celebration or morose lamentation. But as the issue of fetal tissue transplantation research is brought to closure, at least temporarily, it is not clear who has won and who has lost.

A few weeks ago I went to a party in Northwest Washington held to celebrate the lifting of the ban on fetal tissue research. All the players were there: Congressman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), who led the congressional charge to remove restrictions on using federal funds; the Reverend Guy Walden, a prolife minister whose own family had benefited from experimental fetal tissue transplantation therapy; Joan Samuelson, a Parkinson's patient, who had toiled endlessly to see that research using fetal tissue be continued; and many others. I understood them, but I still felt out of place at this celebration and stayed only a short while.

On January 22, the day that President Bill Clinton issued the executive order lifting the ban on fetal tissue research, National Right to Life condemned his decision saying it would lead to "harvesting these babies for spare parts." This was also a sentiment with which I could not fully agree.

As a legislative assistant from 1989 to 1992 for John C. Danforth (R-Mo.), a committed prolife Senator and Episcopal priest, I had numerous conversations with him about this issue. At first, I felt strongly that he should support lifting the ban on fetal tissue research. But by the time it came to a vote in 1992, I was feeling a degree of uncertainty and discomfort that I had not felt before. Now that the ban has been lifted only one thing is clear about my own viewpoint: I am ambivalent.

I had originally been swayed by the view that abortion was a separate issue from fetal tissue transplant. No matter what one's view on abortion, fetal tissue transplantation research could be supported. The argument took a variety of forms: Abortion is legal, and probably always will be, so we may as well bring some good out of it. (As Senator Strom Thurmond [R-S.C.] recently said in congressional debate, "This is not about taking lives, but saving lives.") Also: Accepting a donated organ from a suicide or murder victim doesn't make suicide or murder acceptable. There were also powerful emotional appeals by people suffering a variety of ailments describing the amazing potential therapies that would come from the use of fetal tissues. Since such claims had as yet no solid scientific support, all the more reason, proponents argued, to put scientists to work on the research.

Finally, proponents relied heavily on the recommendations of the Fetal Tissue Transplantation Research Panel. They never neglected to emphasize that it was a Reagan-appointed advisory panel with some prolife members. The panel had approved the research in December 1988 with certain safeguards: the tissues could not be sold for profit; informed consent for the tissue research could only be sought after a woman had made the abortion decision; a woman could not designate a recipient for the tissue. That the panel approved the research with only a few dissenting voices was seen by proponents as a knockdown, clincher argument. (No doubt, if the same panel had reached a different conclusion, research supporters would have charged that the panel was a political body with only an advisory role.)

Earlier, I had been convinced by these arguments. But in 1992, as the matter came up in the Senate, I began to have some hesitation. The ease with which research proponents denied any connection between abortion and this type of research began to bother me. Proponents dismissed the opposition by charging "political interference with science." They lamented that the issue had become "mired in abortion politics." They treated disagreement from members of Congress as an annoyance, necessary to placate prolife supporters, rather than respecting a genuine moral hesitation about the implications of medicine becoming dependent on abortions for lifesaving therapies.

These slogans simply did not ring true for me; those lobbying to lift the ban never adequately addressed the symbolic sanction of abortion that this research implied. Perhaps this research could be isolated from abortion and the abortion decision, but could it ever be morally separated? Could we accept a therapy that, if proven effective, would require thousands of abortions a year to sustain an adequate level of fetal tissue? Did we want to become dependent on abortion as a means of curing people? Wouldn't it be preferable, in experimenting with

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fetal transplantation therapy, to rely on the tissue from spontaneous abortions and those occasioned by ectopic pregnancies?

Despite a detailed briefing by an NIH scientist about the limited usefulness of tissue from spontaneous abortions and ectopic pregnancies, in which he argued that only a small percentage would yield usable tissue, I began to wonder why we shouldn't just do research with this small percent. I was not convinced by the scientific or policy argument that using tissue from sources other than elective abortions was not feasible. But a proposal to study the feasibility of using fetal tissues from non-elective abortions was soundly rejected by Congress and was seen by many research proponents as simply another maneuver to stall research. Ultimately President George Bush authorized such a fetal tissue bank through executive order, but it is likely to lapse under the Clinton administration.

Despite the limited parameters of the debate on fetal tissue research, at some point, even in the midst of uncertainty and ambivalence, public policy must be shaped; a decision must be made as to whether to proceed or to continue to ban such research. President Clinton has made the decision and Congress has approved it. I regret that neither seriously entertained a third option: to proceed with caution and with open eyes. This approach, though, would have required concessions from the proresearch contingent acknowledging that we should be hesitant about the possibility of creating a high demand for aborted fetuses. Proceeding with caution would mean allowing fetal research to move ahead using tissue from elective abortions as well as ectopic and spontaneous abortions, but on a limited basis while continuing to study seriously the feasibility of using only tissue from non-elective abortions. Proceeding with open eyes would mean allowing fetal research while remaining conscious of, and uncomfortable with, its inherent connection to abortion.

LIZ LEIBOLD McCLOSKEY

Liz Leibold McCloskey, formerly on the staff of Senator John C. Danforth, is now a research assistant on the National Advisory Board for Ethics in Reproduction.

THE GALILEO FILE: STILL OPEN

THE LEANING TOWER OF TRUTH

ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Late last fall unexpected headlines appeared in newspapers across the country: the Catholic church was at long last admitting its error in convicting the seventeenth-century scientist Galileo of heresy for believing the earth revolved around the sun. Since Galileo has been dead for 350 years, and since everyone else has long known who was right about the heliocentric theory of the solar system, the news arrived accompanied by some unintended humor.

The occasion was an address in Rome on October 31 by Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Judging from the headlines, the pope's admission was, if not timely, at least straightforward. The *New York Times* headline said clearly, "Vatican Says It Was Wrong about Galileo." The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reported, "Pope Ready to Admit Church's Error in Condemning Galileo." And a Catholic diocesan paper, the St. Cloud (Minnesota) *Visitor* was no less blunt: "Pope: Church Erred in the Case of Galileo."

Knowing that the Catholic church rarely admits error, I was intensely curious about what the pope actually said. Was he referring to the church's 1616 decision to declare the Copernican theory heretical? (The proposition that the sun was the center of the world and stationary was declared to be "foolish and absurd in philosophy, and formally heretical since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture....")

Or was John Paul talking about Galileo's trial in 1633? In that year the aging scientist was convicted by the Roman Inquisition of "vehement suspicion of heresy" for allegedly disobeying a papal command not to "hold or defend" Copernicanism, delivered after the declaration of 1616. If the latter, not only the question of an error in theology but that of a wrongful conviction and punishment would need to be addressed.

The newspaper stories purportedly supporting the headlines turned out not to be very helpful. They didn't quote much from the pope's speech, and the quotations that appeared were not entirely consistent with the headlines. Fortunately a journalist friend in Rome sent me the Vatican's English translation of the pope's address. And it was soon publicly available in the U.S., in the November 12 issue of *Origins*.

What is really contained in John Paul's address—and what isn't there—needs to be better known.

John Paul gave his thoughts on Galileo in the context of concluding the work of a Galileo study commission he had appointed in 1981. It is not widely known that this commission did little original research on Galileo, that evidently no attempt was made to reach a consensus, or that there really was no final report properly so called but only a short summary of the Galileo issue delivered by French Cardinal Paul Poupard, a member of the commission.

Back in 1979, when John Paul broke a long-running official silence on Galileo, the pope had in a sense settled the matter in advance. Speaking then as now to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, John Paul praised "the greatness of Galileo" and then made the unprecedented admission that Galileo "had much to suffer...from the men and agencies of the church." The pope sounded this theme again on several occasions during the 1980s.

Now, in 1992, the pope obviously wanted to bring closure to the new Galileo commission's work—which in fact never included a systematic review of the issues with an eye to some new conclusion, but rather produced several new scholarly publications on Galileo by some of the commission's members.

But headlines to the contrary notwithstanding, nowhere in

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the pope's words last fall will anyone find phrases such as "the church was wrong," "the Vatican erred," or the like. The most that can be said for the pope's "admission" is that he implies several times that Galileo was right about the motion of earth and sun, and somebody else—but not "the church"—was wrong. Stated in this way, such an "admission" is not exactly a startling finding.

John Paul first asks a question about the history of the Galileo case: "Has not this case long been shelved and have not the errors committed been recognized?" And he answers his own question: "That is certainly true." Now here may be a disguised and indirect admission that the church was wrong. But the pope doesn't say it.

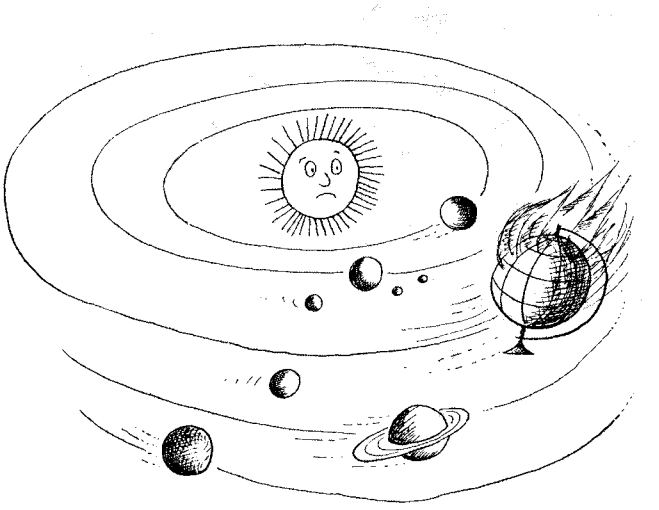
Later in the address he alludes to the fact that Copernicanism was declared heretical in 1616 because it contradicted passages of Sacred Scripture. At that time, the pope says, "the majority of theologians" were led by their misunderstandings "unduly to transpose into the realm of the doctrine of the faith a question that in fact pertained to scientific investigation."

Now that sentence, tricky as it is, contains a clearer implication of admission of error. But who made the error? "Theologians." John Paul omits the fact that Pope Paul V approved the condemnation of Copernicanism in 1616, which was indeed recommended by "theologians." The current pope also leaves out the facts that the ten cardinals of the Inquisition who conducted Galileo's 1633 trial were closely guided by Pope Urban VIII and that their 7-3 decision to convict him and sentence him to life imprisonment was approved by the pope.

Still later in the speech, John Paul does admit something directly, namely, "Galileo...understood why only the sun could function as the center of the world as it was then known." But if Galileo was right, who was wrong? Again, the pope lays the error off on "the theologians of the time."

While John Paul clearly avoided pinning any error on "the church," he apparently could not stop himself from taking a few pot shots at Galileo. Galileo had rejected the suggestion of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, the pope claims, "to present the Copernican system as a hypothesis, inasmuch as it had not been confirmed by irrefutable proof." This is a distortion of history. Bellarmine, Pope Paul V's leading theological adviser, had injected himself into the controversy over Copernicanism in his 1615 "Letter to Foscarini," in which he explicitly advised Galileo to restrict himself to "speaking suppositionally and not absolutely" about such matters. Galileo and Bellarmine had differing views on what a "supposition" or "hypothesis" meant in science. To Bellarmine, it meant setting down a proposition such as the earth's motion merely as a convenience for calculation, and hence not related to the truth. For Galileo, a hypothesis was a way to get at "the absolute truth of nature," as Galileo himself put it in an unpublished essay in 1615.

Moreover, to call Bellarmine's reference to "suppositions" a suggestion to Galileo misses the harsh judgments and ominous warnings contained in Bellarmine's "Letter to Foscarini." There, the cardinal, a powerful man, had said that "to want to affirm that in reality the sun is at the center of the world...is a very dangerous thing" by virtue of "rendering Holy Scripture



false." Bellarmine had come within a breath of saying that Copernicanism was heretical.

John Paul, in the same sentence about Bellarmine's "suggestion," asserts that Copernicanism at that time "had not been confirmed by irrefutable proof." This is disingenuous. Surely the pope knows that "proof" was not the issue in Galileo's science but rather the accumulation of evidence supporting the Copernican theory. Galileo's discovery of the phases of the planet Venus, for example, "showed conclusively that Venus revolved not around the earth but around the sun," in the words of Galileo scholar Stillman Drake.

The closest John Paul comes to admitting that Galileo's trial reached the wrong conclusion is to say, "the sentence of 1633 was not irreformable." But to be "irreformable" is not the same as "being reformed" or actually corrected. John Paul simply does not face the question whether Galileo was indeed wrongfully convicted, though his circuitous implications have apparently convinced many that that's what he meant. The editors of *Crisis* magazine, in their January 1993 issue, have announced—without adequate basis—that Galileo's condemnation "is now officially void."

Who can say what John Paul really thinks about the 1616 condemnation of Copernicanism or about Galileo's trial? In his address last fall, evidently his final word on the matter, he implied much and directly asserted little. Can we expect no more candor from the current pope—not even on a subject three-and-a-half centuries old? In 1874 Lord Acton, in a letter to John Henry Newman, summarized the papal tendency to defend past papal decisions: "It is the presumption in favor of papal acts, the tenderness for papal examples, that is the difficulty for Catholicism." We now see that this is still a difficulty for John Paul.

Owing to John Paul II's unwillingness to speak unambiguously about Galileo, the controversy will continue.

ROBERT L. SPAETH

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A ROLE OF ONE'S OWN

A WAY OUT OF THE 'RIGHTS' WARS

The questions that surround the issues of women in the church, homosexual behavior, men and the men's movement—all of these gender- and sex-related things—have taken the form of a fight between those who think first of all of individual rights, and those who look instead at communities and their values, and see any expression of individualism as a grave challenge to them. This latter concern is, in a way, an expansion of the "rights" concern: the battle is one between the rights of the individual, with his or her own desires, hopes, and fears, and the community's own desires, hopes, and fears—the community's rights, in other words, as opposed to the rights of those who appear to challenge the community and its values. And this is a no-win argument. The question turns around the comparative importance of the rights of the individual and the community, and of course both matter so much that no one can claim a final victory. When either wins finally, something essential is crushed.

It isn't a dialectic so much as it is a misplaced argument. I would like to argue for another approach, which may confuse things but may also offer a new way into the question.

To what extent are we meant to *be symbolic*? A single man means one kind of thing, a single woman means another; married, they mean something together, and each means something different within the marriage they have formed. This is almost too simple a truth to name, and yet it has been essential in traditional cultures, where a woman is not just "a woman," but can be (at once, and yet different in each of these roles) mother, daughter, sister, wife, widow. "Woman" is a kind of shadowy form behind specific, symbolic roles; it is in its own way a symbol, but all by itself is not strong enough. *How* is this woman a mother, daughter, and so forth? There are overreaching categories (like "friend") that one expects to apply at a number of levels, but they don't work the same way as the others. "Friend" can be opposed to "enemy"—and of course there is the category of people who are neither friends nor enemies, but indifferently related folks who tolerate others in varying degrees of affection or irritation. But "mother" and "sister" aren't descriptions of this sort of qualitative relationship. There isn't some opposite to either role, or any neutralization of either role.

I mention these obvious roles and categories as important to the question because they have been generally ignored in the ways we frame arguments. Mothers in our culture are women who wind up in that role, as if the role were secondary to the fact of its "host's" womanhood. The fact that traditional cultures have ceremonies marking a boy's or girl's emergence into manhood or womanhood has been noted by feminists and by the men's movement, but things tend to stop there—or we have sentimental, more-or-less greeting-card-level celebrations of what being a mother or father or brother or sister or son or daughter has meant at the level of being affirmed or wounded, without the sense of what it means to be one of these things in the first place.

And that is precisely what is lacking. What are the responsibilities of fatherhood, motherhood, sisterhood, brotherhood, being a son or daughter? So much of the current concern seems to be, "How have I been wounded in all of this?" more than "What should I be in all of this? What am I meant to mean?" There is a profound examination of conscience for all of us here, and not much help in a culture that stresses our rights.

There is also the danger of a continuing ugly tradition: ignoring those people who are single, who fall outside of traditional categories. I have noticed something about single people who are committed to the church, or to other organizations dedicated to helping people. They tend to be generous not only in their time but in their affection: they become relatives to people they may not be related to by blood, but their generosity is at least as full, and it is generally unrecognized. Our symbolic structures are seldom used to point people to specific roles in our culture, but they are still used to exclude. (We see these people in terms of what they aren't; who they *are* is not acknowledged.)

It is certainly unreasonable to expect any respect for fatherhood, motherhood, fidelity in marriage, celibacy, or virginity if the idea of specific symbolically important roles is less important than the idea of individual rights. We can't have instruction in these roles without a common sense of what they mean, which means the possibility of instruction in what they mean, and this is not possible at the broadest social level. In a socially and religiously diverse society the only way to arrive at a common understanding of these things is either by dilution—watering everything down to a point at which it means very little at all, which leaves us more or less where we are right now—or an acceptance of a diversity, a tolerance of deep differences among discrete communities.

When the satisfaction of the desires of the individual is seen as the most important goal in life, nothing traditional can stand. A tradition (and this of course includes the place and meaning of symbols and roles in a tradition) always involves the idea of slow learning, growth into something that may not be immediately apparent—a hierarchy of values and understandings, in other words. This in itself is considered a threatening idea by many, but it is an ancient one, and has had more staying power than any of its recent challengers.

I can't think of any way to get from here to there, from where we are as a society to a place in which symbols and roles may again be resonant, where elders are not just seen as geriatric patients with expensive problems, where roles like man, wife, fa-

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ther, mother, and child have important symbolic meaning, where authority means the assumption of responsibility more than the right (that word again) to rule. But it could be that such problems as the breakdown of marriage, the exodus from the vowed religious life, the lawlessness of adolescents who come from shattered families (or no real families at all), and the marginalization of the old—to name only a few of our problems—stem in large part from this breakdown in appreciation for what it means to mean something, by virtue of having been placed in a role. □

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

THE 'STATE' OF 'DEFENSE'

WHERE THE BIG GUNS ARE

This column is designed to extend a previous commentary on the Clinton foreign policy ("Clinton on the World Stage," January 29). Since then, a series of new appointments have been made or proposed for second-level positions on the foreign-policy team (State, Defense, and National Security Council) and one major foreign-policy decision has been made. Taken together—personnel and policy choices—they provide a clearer sense of how policy will be formulated in the Clinton presidency and what role the United States seeks to play.

The Clinton team must meet three requirements, one imposed from within the Clinton presidency, the other two imposed by the world confronting this administration. The internal standard is the determination of the president to focus primarily and consistently on domestic policy, particularly the economy and health care.

The strength of this conviction is manifested in the public time and energy given to the domestic agenda, in the absence of any foreign-policy assessment in the State of the Union address, and in the low-key policy issues. The paradox of this strategy is that an American president can give foreign policy a decisively secondary role only if he performs very well at the task, keeping major crises at bay, preempting trouble before it explodes and demands his full attention. To stay ahead of the conflicts of the world, particularly this world of the 1990s, the Clinton policy team must contend with the other two requirements for developing a U.S. position in the world. First, there must be some "big picture" architects for policy: Whether the U.S. wants to attend to it or not, the decade of the 1990s is a time of profound change in the fabric of world affairs. Having a solid conceptual framework to interpret the dimensions and degree of change does not commit the United States to a highly activist policy, but it will provide the historical, philosophical, and political perspective for determining which issues cannot be ignored and which choices must be made.

Second, the big picture must then be related to an in-depth, detailed understanding of particular situations. The big picture provides an impetus to act; the detailed assessment of specific cases will often induce caution about the ability of any outside actor to change local conditions decisively.

The issue Mr. Clinton has engaged—Bosnia—embodies both big-picture significance and local intractability. Bosnia is a consequence of *the* major change in international politics of the last four decades: the end of the cold war. The cold war had a place for Tito's Yugoslavia; with Tito gone, as well as the imposed discipline of the cold war, the old issues of the Balkans have arisen again.

Bosnia also illustrates the limits of external influence when local conflict is driven by ultimate loyalties to ethnic, national, and religious identity. Without the big picture, the danger Bosnia poses for the Balkans as a whole or the signal it sends to others contemplating some version of "ethnic cleansing" may be ignored. Without the specific details, the U.S. could easily underestimate the difficulty of "doing something" in response to the horrors of this ancient feud.

How does the Clinton team look in light of the double demand for the big picture and discrete details? The dominant impression generated since the inauguration has been the visibility and reputation of the nominations at the Defense Department. Les Aspin seems bent on creating the kind of think tank which he had at the House Armed Services Committee. As part of a general restructuring of the Pentagon he has created positions to address human rights, democracy, the environment, proliferation, and successor states of the Soviet Union. To staff these new roles in the Pentagon, he has recruited people well-published on these themes.

On the whole, they tend to be "big picture" analysts, best represented by two designates for assistant secretary: Morton Halperin of the Carnegie Endowment and Graham Allison, former dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Halperin, who will have responsibilities for human rights and democracies, combines an extraordinary range of publications with years of experience in the Washington bureaucracy. Established as an expert on nuclear strategy in the most creative phase of that discipline (the early 1960s), he went on to serve in the McNamara Pentagon, to resign from the Kissinger White House staff (over Cambodia), and to spend over a decade with the ACLU in Washington before taking up issues of ethnicity, self-determination, and democracy in the last couple of years. Halperin writes in a style designed to succeed in bureaucratic bargaining. He

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will not take long to readjust to being inside the policy process.

Allison published a pathbreaking study of the Cuban Missile Crisis, then stayed with the nuclear issues until the late 1980s. Since 1989 he has been the most visible U.S. proponent of a "Grand Bargain" whereby the West would commit substantial resources to the restructuring of the old Soviet Union in return for policies of arms reductions, democratization, and economic restructuring. The bargain never sold in the West, but Allison has continued his work on the future of Russia, editing with Ashton Carter (another new assistant secretary) a forthcoming book on cooperative denuclearization. Along with Halperin and Allison, the new undersecretary of defense is William Perry who served in the Carter Defense Department, and has just collaborated in a study titled *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*. The point here is not a bibliographical exercise, but simply to illustrate that, at Defense, Aspin has assembled a team which will gravitate toward the "big picture," and will seek a policy-setting role on key questions.

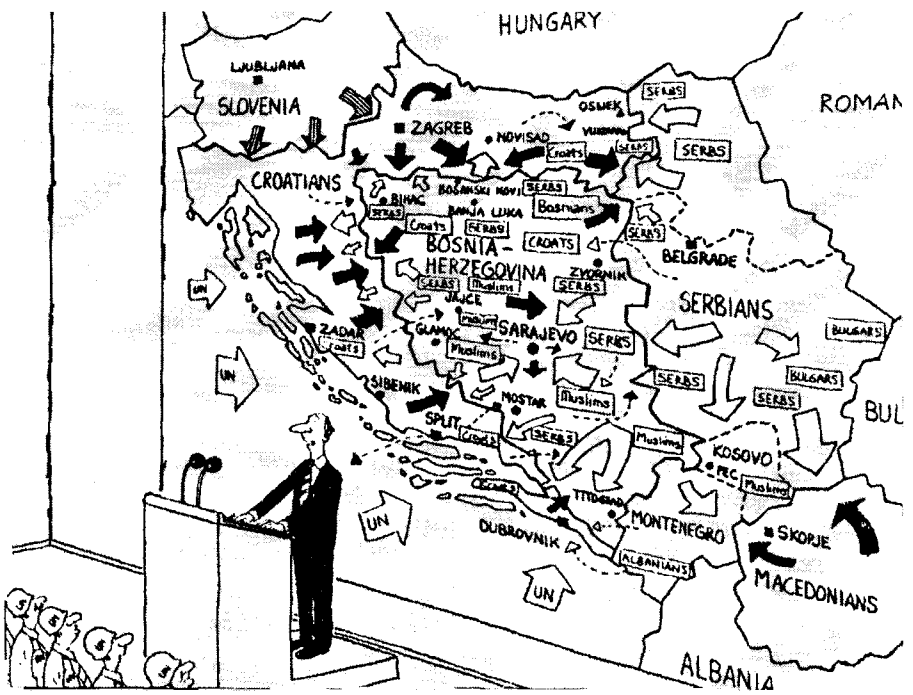
To some degree the Pentagon team looks a bit like a State Department on the wrong side of the Potomac River. The contrast is even more striking when one looks at the second level of appointments in the Christopher State Department. The dominant characteristic is not "big picture" analysts but well-seasoned diplomats whose strengths have been in implementing policy choices. The names are well known: Winston Lord for East Asia, George Moose for Africa, Peter Tarnoff as undersecretary for political affairs. These names command respect as experienced representatives of the U.S. diplomatic service, but no name at State stands out as a counterpoint to the kind of thinking which will likely emanate from the Pentagon.

The contrast between Defense and State makes the traditional role of the National Security Council crucial in the policy process of this administration. To some degree it is a benefit to have strong political orientations in the Defense Department; but in the end the policy from there will still be shaped in light of a security conception of the U.S. role in the world. The NSC staff will be the court of last resort to balance the substantial activity which an Aspin-led Pentagon will generate. Anthony Lake's NSC staff thus far seems designed to fill this role. Some of the names are not as visible as Aspin's appointees, but others, like Richard Feinberg on Latin America, have an established record in their field. The NSC work will bear Lake's stamp, a decisively political conception of the U.S. role, and this will be a critical dimension of keeping balance in the Clinton policy process.

The first major product of the process has been the decision on Bosnia. Essentially, the policy is to support the Vance-Owen negotiations with some U.S. modification of their plan. The initial instinct of the Clinton administration was to distance itself from the Vance-Owen efforts, but in the end the U.S. has placed its relief efforts, its diplomatic backing, and its promise of a limited number of U.S. troops in support of the negotiations of the United Nations.

There are two views of the Clinton policy. One, represented by Leslie Gelb of the *New York Times*, and a former colleague of many Clinton appointees, is highly critical. In Gelb's view, support for Vance-Owen is a mistake, since it accepts, however reluctantly, Serbian conquests in Bosnia. The alternative view is that the Clinton team has found the narrow path between a major commitment of U.S. forces, which would be needed to take back territory from the Serbs and impose a new order, and being accused of doing nothing. Two different pressures could push the U.S. beyond its present position. The first would be the threat of the Bosnian conflict becoming a Balkan war; at that point, the "realist" arguments which presently hold that the U.S. has no compelling interests in Bosnia would likely shift toward a more activist role. The second would be increasing moral outrage at Serbian actions in Bosnia; the push would then be for humanitarian intervention. At this writing, neither of these pressures is strong enough to dislodge the present policy.

The Clinton attempt thus far has been to combine a realism of restraint about U.S. capabilities with limited efforts to reduce the suffering of the victims. Holding this tenuous consensus together is not simply a task of internal coherence in the Clinton administration. It also involves responding to arguments that stronger action in Bosnia—more U.S. political leadership aimed at the Europeans, and, possibly, U.S. troops—are required on both realist and moral grounds. □



"Any questions?"

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THINGS DANNY TAUGHT ME

A FATHER'S STORY

FRANCIS X. MAIER

He stood there, dignified, in his polyester fast-food uniform, earnestly waiting for the bus and oblivious to the river of traffic around him, to the forced smiles and brief, uneasy glances from passersby.

In a world of multiple urgencies and lives racing at 50 mghz, he had one focus only—in this case, the Laurel Canyon bus to McDonald's. He was alone, and he needed to concentrate. He had a job. That meant a schedule and responsibilities.

Stopped at the light, I watched him through my windshield. He was eighteen or so, short black hair slightly askew, with the thick body and unfinished facial features so common to Down's syndrome. Three years ago, I would have looked away, just as the other people nearby on the street were doing now.

But instead I just watched. I find that I can't look away anymore, not from Down's people, not since Danny.

My wife and I were both forty-one when she became pregnant. It was a surprise. We had been out of the baby business for nine years. Suann was teaching full time and going to grad school. We had three older kids. I had my hands full with my own job. And yet the news was like a wonderful fresh wind. Sure it was inconvenient, and yes, the future would get a drastic overhaul. But we were also excited. After all, we were veterans, more experienced and relaxed, and more financially stable. Secretly too, even more than my wife, I just wasn't ready to let the idea of babies go. All those mistakes with the first three—well, this time, we'd get it right.

We knew the risks. We got the standard, "so-you-can't-sue-me-later" briefing from the obstetrician on birth defects in older women, but both of us had been active on the abortion issue for more than a decade. It was never an option. Even after the first, slight hint of trouble turned up in a blood test, we declined an amniocentesis. What was the point? The results would be unreliable, and the test itself could hurt the baby. Better to leave it in God's hands; he'd handle it; which, in his own way, he did.

I remember the exact moment when I knew, with my heart anyway, that things had gone south. We were in the ob-gyn's office, and on the ultrasound screen, as the baby swam serenely in the womb, the doctor measured the fetus's arm once, then again, and then a third and fourth time. Suann, smiling, devoured the baby with her eyes. But I knew, and so did the doctor. There's a statistical relationship between bone-structure abnormalities, particularly in the upper arm, and Down's syndrome; not enough to be conclusive, but enough to spark shallow words of reassurance and advice for a second opinion.

Two weeks later, Danny was born by emergency C-section, blue, limp, underweight, lungs filled with fluid. Three things happened in rapid succession: They suctioned the liquid from his lungs; I held him as my wife baptized him; and they took him away to intensive care.

It's then, with the baby out of your arms and the big emptiness just beginning, that your heart is most like a vacuum, and into the space comes a rush of feelings that are hot and contradictory, that make you ashamed and exalted at the same time: anger at God; fear about the future; helplessness and failure without a bottom; but also an absolute clarity that you can handle this; an urgency to protect the baby and his mother, to somehow make the cup pass by cutting a deal with God; or hey, maybe there's been a mistake; and even, most humiliating of all, a wheedling pride that whispers: Maybe I can use this.

You discover a lot about yourself. I assumed, with the callousness writers seem to perfect, that this "Danny thing" would be the source of so much good material. Well, he is; but not remotely in the way I expected. For the two years since his birth, every time I've sat down to write about him, an arctic silence has settled into my head. Danny will not be used. He is too intimate, too demanding, too funny, too eager to play; he does not fit conveniently into a prefabbed holding pen for the mentally handicapped. And I am too ignorant and not far enough along the road to offer any advice, other than to recount the experience of my own family.

I know that this is doable. It hasn't been easy, but it hasn't been a cross either. You stop thinking like that. Danny's just here, he's part of our normal routine. You adjust. Our marriage has the same love and strengths, and also the same faultlines, it always had. So does the family. You learn to stop melodramatizing; you get tired of your own bathos.

I also know that we've been given a gift. A friend, Chicago novelist Patrick Creevy (*Lake Shore Drive*), the brother of one Down's person and father of a Down's daughter, puts it this way: "The best thing [about a mentally handicapped child] is having a son or a daughter in whom you're never disappointed; you're absolutely out of the business of disappointment....So many of the expectations that in parents turn tragic, we're safe

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from. And in its place comes this wonderful, unconditional love, an unburdening from the hunger for perfection."

It's a kind of redemption. You enter a community—parents of sick and handicapped children—filled with far harder stories than Down's syndrome; where quiet, heroic love is an ordinary affair, and you learn from it. Danny's brothers and sister are a part of that now; they know what the imperfect look and think and feel like. They aren't afraid.

I also know, as my novelist friend says, that a "supposed normality which begins to eliminate 'otherness' in the name of its own self-image" is profoundly evil, and that "[words like pro-choice,] while they're supposed to embody liberalism, are really the worst and most terrifying kind of conservatism."

Down's syndrome children are becoming extinct. Most are now aborted before they can be born.

Ninety percent of Down's children are only mildly to moderately retarded. And while they are prone to a wide variety of physical ailments, nearly all are treatable. In fact, most Down's children, with love and care, can live happy, productive, surprisingly independent lives.

So whenever I pass that young Down's man in his McDonald's uniform, I look his way. I'll tell you why. There is a person there; someone with courage. He has ventured into a world that doesn't see him, and in his own way, he is succeeding in it.

I look at him, I watch him, I pray for the eyes to really see him—for my own sake. The problem, I have learned from Danny, is not with his humanity, but with mine. □

LES MURRAY
The Say-but-the-Word Centurion Attempts a Summary

That numinous healer who preached Saturnalia and paradox
has died a slave's death. We were maneuvered into it by priests
and by the man himself. To complete his poem.

He was certainly dead. The pilum guaranteed it. His message,
unwritten except on his body, like anyone's, was wrapped
like a scroll and dispatched to our liberated selves, the gods.

If he has now risen, as our infiltrators gibber,
he has outdone Orpheus, who went alive to the Shades.
Solitude may be stronger than embraces. Inventor of the mustard tree,

he mourned one death, perhaps all, before he reversed it.
He forgave the sick to health, disregarded the sex of the Furies
when expelling them from minds. And he never speculated.

If he is risen, all are children of a most high real God
or something even stranger called by that name
who knew to come and be punished for the world.

To have knowledge of right, after that, is to be in the wrong.
Death came through the sight of law. His people's oldest wisdom.
If death is now the birth-gate into things unsayable

in language of death's era, there will be wars about religion
as there never were about the death-ignoring Olympians.
Love, too, his new universal, so far ahead of you it has died

for you before you meet it, may seem colder than the favors of gods
who are our poems, good and bad. But there never was a bad baby.
Half of his worship will be grinding his face in the dirt

then lifting it up to beg, in private. The low will rule, and curse by him.
Divine bastard, soul-usurer, eros-frightener, he is out to monopolize hatred.
Whole philosophies will be devised for their brief snubbings of him.

But regained excels kept, he taught. Thus he has done the impossible
to show us it is there. To ask it of us. It seems we are to be the poem
and live the impossible. As each time we have, with mixed cries.

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF THE POOR?

A MISSIONARY RESHAPES HIS THEOLOGY

ROBERT HURTEAU

On July 2, 1991, a small group of Shining Path subversives raided the town of Moho in Peru's southern department of Puno, where I have been working as a parish priest. They incited looting at city hall, then turned to the parish where they also urged people to loot our agricultural seed bank program. Finishing that off, the Shining Path proceeded to my house and the sisters' convent and took what they wanted. The sisters, a fellow priest, and I all kept out of sight and counted our blessings. Before leaving Moho, the subversives executed six prisoners they had brought from elsewhere.

Meanwhile a strange thing was going on. The townspeople of Moho, following on the heels of the Shining Path, went into the convent, the priests' house, and the parish center and began to steal as well. The subversives did not incite them; mob psychology had taken over. "That day was like a fair," a woman later told me. Personal belongings, benches, tables, kitchen utensils, and blankets disappeared in the melee.

The brutality of the Shining Path is now expected, but the looting of our homes and the parish center by our own parishioners was not. How could this have happened?

Our parish team left Moho for a while and anguished over our future there. Obviously the townspeople's looting loomed large in our dilemma, larger perhaps than the danger presented by the Shining Path. This was especially true for my colleagues, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, for their community had been at work in Moho for twenty years. We speculated on what lay behind the townspeople's actions: Perhaps our standard of living was too far above theirs; perhaps we had neglected the townspeople in favor of working with the *campesinos*; perhaps they were fickle, small-town folk. Perhaps.

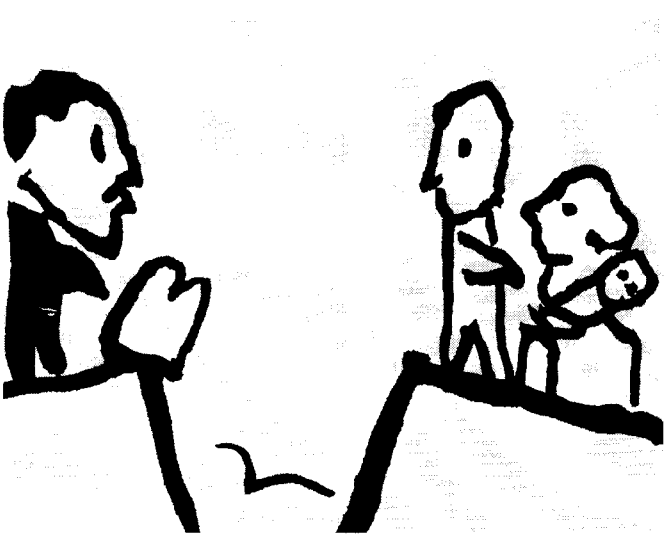
When we returned to Moho, tension over the looting persisted. For a while we tried to face the situation squarely, asking people to return what they had taken. This brought few results, and so, after a few months, we dropped the subject. But even that did not bring the tension to an end. Ties had been broken and would be a long time in mending.

To say we have been disappointed and felt frustrated is to put it mildly. As church people, we had been trying to opt for the poor, and our own people had taken advantage of us. Pessimism became a real temptation.

After a while I began to see that the looting could also serve as a purifying moment. Had I made a preferential option for the poor because they are good people, or because they are poor people? So these events became, for me, a moment to take a more mature and perhaps less idealistic "option."

I believe the church in Latin America has also arrived at a purifying moment. As a church, we too have been mystified as we have watched the inhuman conditions in which so many of our people live go from bad to worse—this in spite of waning dictatorships and the advent of democratic governments. *Laissez-faire* economics is the rule now in nearly all Latin American countries, and many of us stand in disbelief that there will be much of a trickle down. There is change, yet there is no real change. The church still has an option for the poor, yet no real project that adequately takes these economic and political changes into account. Did we opt for the poor because we believed we had the solution to their problems, or because they are poor? Pessimism or purification?

Many of us working in Latin American countries have proposed to be a "church of the poor"—a church that stands with the people and is in solidarity with the poor, that seeks justice, that is communal. This was not meant to create a parallel church (a church of the poor, a church of the middle class, and a church of the rich), but rather an attempt to reform the whole institution, so that the least among us and their concerns would have an adequate place and a hearing within the church. To speak



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of the church of the poor then is to speak of a church where all, including the poor, are welcome as Christ.

The preferential option for the poor was born in the late sixties and flourished in the seventies. Like any reform proposal, it was not accepted by everyone, but it was a key element in the pastoral understanding of the Latin American bishops in Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979), and Santo Domingo (1992), and it was made concrete in pastoral work in many parts of the continent. God is a God of justice: in the Bible, God acted on behalf of the poor and through the poor. The church, in turn, must be in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering.

The preferential option for the poor also brings the poor into the heart of the church, inviting them to become subjects in their faith journey by reflecting on their own experiences of life, faith, and the church. They who were "no people" (people who were not taken into account) become, in the church, "God's people" (I Peter 1:10). This is why most liberation theologians do not understand liberation theology to be a doctrinal system, but rather a way of doing theology, a way that makes the poor and their faith experience the starting point of theological reflection.

This was and is the main direction for the proponents of the church of the poor. To this end, several corollaries served as underpinnings.

First, proponents of this church would face dangerous opposition from very powerful outside forces, principally military regimes. This was the experience of the church in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia, as well as in Central America and in some Caribbean countries during the seventies. As the church spoke up for justice in the face of official injustice, the price paid was increased suffering and risk, even martyrdom.

Second, in some circumstances the church endorsed revolutionary movements that proposed replacing these brutal regimes with leftist-socialist governments. Nicaragua was the case in point. While the church's blessing of the Sandinista rise to power eventually became a point of heated debate, at the time of their victory it was clear as a bell that the hierarchy could not possibly stand with Somoza. The proponents of the church of the poor were very much in favor of the Sandinistas. Ergo, if it was licit for the church to join forces with the Left in Nicaragua, it could be licit elsewhere. Real social change, liberation, then "...seemed just around the corner," as Chilean theologian Raul Rosales recently said.

Third, various analytic tools were used for political and theological reflection. In addition to the time-honored "see, judge, act," there was a focus on the "three violences." This focused on a configuration of (1) institutional violence (the overwhelming poverty as well as political disenfranchisement of the poor majority); (2) revolutionary or subversive violence: a reaction in the name of the poor to institutional violence; and (3) repressive violence: the reaction of the powers-that-be to subversive violence in order to maintain institutional violence as the status quo.

According to the framework of the "three violences," the poor will inevitably react to the injustices to which they are subjected. The church, because it seeks justice, takes the risk of standing with the poor in their claims (though, in most cases, without justifying recourse to violence). Yet it is a struggle, and in this struggle there were good guys and bad guys. The good guys were on the left—the socialist option—and the bad guys were on the right—the military regimes and their right-wing political allies. The nuances varied from situation to situation and from country to country, but this was the basic analytic framework among proponents of the church of the poor.

Imagine my surprise, then, in 1991 when Carlos Kenny from Instituto Bartolome de las Casas-Rimac (one of the most important think tanks among proponents of the church of the poor in Peru) told us at a pastoral gathering that we should put aside the "three violences" as an analytic tool. He suggested that we look at violence as solely the use of armed force, and that each use be evaluated ethically. This focus gives us a much clearer ethical ground to stand on than that of the "three violences," which, because it labels as violent the rampant social ills of Peru, tends to justify automatically subversive violence without consideration of whether or not the "second" violence would really change things. Further, the "three violences" approach doesn't even touch on family violence and child abuse, nor does it address common criminal violence, all of which are violences that afflict many Peruvians right in their own homes.

What about the church of the poor joining forces with the Left? Nicaragua is again illustrative. Real social change seemed possible in Nicaragua, yet in 1990 the Sandinistas lost the election. While their own internal problems contributed to their defeat, the greatest factor was U.S. economic, political, and military pressure. The U.S. government wanted the Sandinistas out and while they remained in power, the embargo, the *con-*

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tras, and other pressures would not be lifted. Weary of the price of facing U.S. opposition, the people of Nicaragua voted for change.

This was a serious blow—leftist-inspired social change in Latin America was doomed to fight an uphill battle against the United States—not to mention the vacuum in support that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

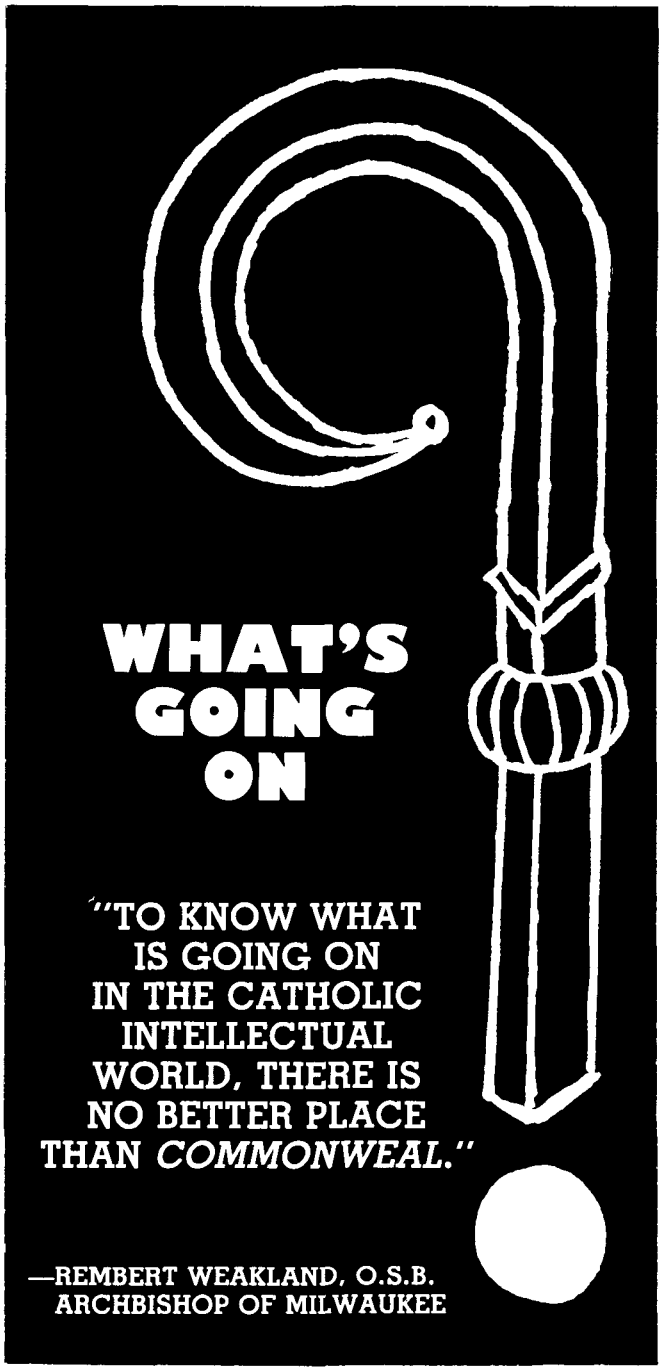
More recently, the advent of democracy has changed the Latin American context. Previously the church's solidarity with the poor, it was expected, would meet with dangerous opposition, most notably from brutal military regimes and their allies. Now, democracy has replaced military dictatorships just about everywhere and open persecution of the church has all but disappeared.

In this changed context, who are the good guys and the bad guys? Before, it is was fairly clear, but now things have turned upside-down. Take Peru, for instance: there it has become unconscionable to support the largest revolutionary movement in the hemisphere, the Shining Path, and the populace supported the coup of Alberto Fujimori. Times have changed.

The situation of the church has changed as well. Over the last decade, most countries have seen the appointment of more conservative bishops along with a decline in the number of foreign priests and religious. This latter point is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, the decline in numbers of foreign priests and religious means that local church personnel can take a more active role. On the other, foreign clergy and religious have been ardent proponents in many places of the church of the poor. When they leave, they are not always able to turn over their work to those of like mind. Of course, the church is always a larger reality than any particular model or ecclesiology. But for those who have worked and hoped for a church of the poor, fewer foreign clergy and religious has sometimes spelled a decline in support for such a church.

All of this adds up to pessimism. Having hoped for real change in society and in the church, we find some of our best prospects have been frustrated. Proponents of the church of the poor continue to reflect on this, but lately with fewer concrete ideas about what to do. The outlook seems increasingly bleak, unless we can change our perspective and begin to see this time as a moment for purification of two kinds.

First, we need to purify our thinking: Can we let go of our past ideas in order to let our thinking keep pace with the new situation? For example, it is unreal to think that social change in Latin America, putting the interests of the poor first, will come when the Left achieves power. In the latest round of elections, people have not voted for the Left, and even if they had, the viability of such a choice seems doubtful. As well, there remain powerful outside forces that help to keep people poor, but the "international imperialism of money" (which has brought us the international debt crisis) no longer needs to assassinate its opponents. Furthermore, at this point, it is hard to sustain the claim that the sources of our social problems come exclusively from outside Latin America, or from the rich. Such a focus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ignores forces within the continent (and even within the world of the poor) that keep people in poverty: for example, speculation, large and small-scale corruption, individual violence, etc. Can we adjust our thinking to this new context?

In Peru I have noticed some adjustment. Among the proponents of the church of the poor, if one listens closely one hears fewer calls for changing unjust social structures and more talk of creating political, social, and economic spaces where the poor can live and work; less of the quest for liberation and more about the quest for life and human dignity; less of the God who liberates and more of the God who promises life. This is the attempted shift of focus: We will achieve a new society not so much by changing the structures that affect people as by people pushing together for a decent space in society.

Second, we need to purify our hearts and motives: How can we sustain our option for and love of the poor in the face of terrible suffering, failed efforts, and continued frustration? A first step would be to learn something about the difference between optimism and hope.

Optimism measures our efforts by results: if we all work hard, things will get better. Of course, Latin America's various economic crises have flown directly in the face of this logic; people work harder and yet are poorer than ever. While we have learned in the church of the poor that love must be concrete and even material (Gustavo Gutierrez says, "When we speak of the Kingdom of God, of life, we use material life as the symbol of the whole life, as in the Eucharist"), the optimistic outlook that connects our efforts and concrete results will inevitably lead us into pessimism.

Hope, as distinct from optimism, looks at the impossible with the eyes of faith: we don't know how things will turn out in spite of all of our efforts, but we believe God is present and with us. Hope connects our current situation to the central Christian mystery, the cross and resurrection. We live among people crucified by inhuman living conditions, and we too experience the failure of our hopes and efforts. What the person of faith sees in herself or himself and in our people is the same crisis the disciples of Jesus faced at Golgotha: at times we are like Peter wanting to flee, and at times we are like Mary willing to face the excruciating pain.

Perseverance in our option for the poor means a great deal to the people whom we serve. When we stand with them and are willing to learn with them and from them about both the good and the bad, both their sins and their humility and courage, and to do this in hopeful times and bleak times, they can tell that this movement toward a church of the poor is not some empty scheme, but is motivated by real gospel charity.

That may be the most important lesson of these years: perhaps some of us have seen our preferential option for the poor as the church's contribution to someone else's project (that of the socialist Left), but now I think we must see this option above all as Christ's option and as an option of his church. There is no need to be exclusive about this—wherever any person or group works to truly better the lot of the poor, we must say with Jesus: "The one who is not against us is for us." Nonetheless, it is perfectly legitimate for us to define this option according to gospel criteria, independently of various political persuasions. We must never lose sight of this reason for our option: We opt for the poor because Christ loved them and chose to redeem the whole world by sharing their lot. Our preferential option for the poor serves those same ends, and those ends only.

Our parish team opted to return to Moho because love is always a little bit inexplicable. Love cannot be defined solely in terms of a quid pro quo, I'll love you if you love me. We began to see that, in spite of all that had happened, in our hearts we still felt attached to these people and this parish that we were sent to serve.

In this way we began to move through our purifying moment as a parish team. We started back to work. I believe a similar challenge now faces the proponents of the church of the poor in Latin America. We have seen closed-off avenues for social change as well as changes that produced little real change. We have seen our optimism turned into the sour taste of pessimism. If we can let go of our attachment to the way things were, we might find some hope, faith, and strength for continuing the tasks before us: the call to be a church of the poor, the call to let Latin America's pressing problems become the church's concerns as well, the call to work side-by-side with the poor and learn from them.

Later on, this may mean new foci for our hopes and work, and perhaps new results. In the interim, it means holding fast, as persons and communities, to the call of God to love concretely and stand with the poor at the cross. □

SCREEN

FEBRUARY REDEEMED

'GROUNDHOG DAY'

February is the twenty-eight-day desert of the calendar. (Leap year makes matters one day worse.) It is a drag and one may say that in the great scheme of things it functions splendidly, precisely by being a drag. After the four-punch holiday k.o. of Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, February gives us the boredom we need to recover, time enough to become blasé so that spring and Easter can wake us up. Valentine's Day is but a holiday for kids and Hallmark, and now that the Lincoln and Washington birthdays have been lumped together as Presidents' Day, they have lost what little distinctiveness they ever possessed as festivals. February is the season of noncelebration, of colorlessness, of stasis.

Who would ever want to make a comedy about February?

Groundhog Day is a movie about February, about the feeling of February, its lassitude and seeming unchangeability. And *Groundhog Day* is joyful. It is a piece of nonsense that may haunt you; it's a bauble made of silver, if not of gold.

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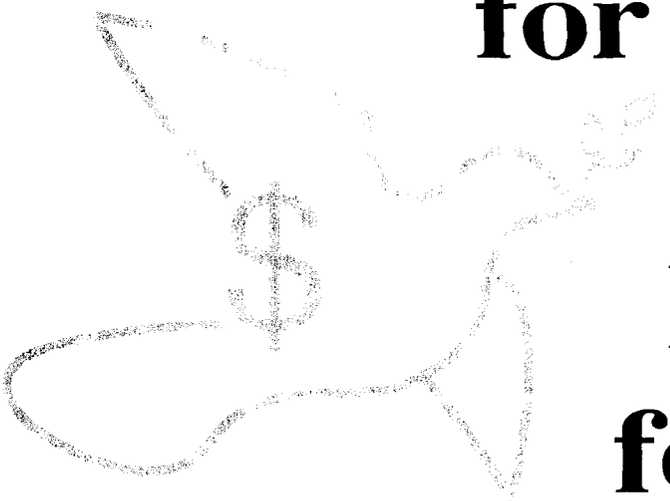

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Its hero, Phil Connors, is a Scrooge figure but he's only a Scrooge for February. He doesn't foreclose mortgages or persecute widows and orphans. He's not tightfisted or grasping. He just doesn't care about anyone or anything except the advancement of his career as a TV personality. Connors happens to be a local news weatherman but would serve just as happily as an anchor or talk-show host, his adaptability being a feature of his noncommitted nature. Phil's march (or saunter, really) through the world of infotainment is merely a way of passing the time of his life instead of living it.

Bill Murray plays this jaded man by using, though modifying, his familiar persona, the hipster who verbally skewers all the bores and dopes around him. Murray's usual devices niftily define Connors: the frozen mask of boredom betrayed only by the shifty eyes which focus on people just long enough to dismiss them; the glibly friendly voice that drops into inaudibility so that Connors can insult people to their faces without their being quite aware of it. And then there are the elaborately grudging gestures. When Murray splashes cold water on his face in the morning, we can see how he despises contact with a natural element, how he hates every bracing drop. When he asks his landlady at his modest bed-and-breakfast for a cappuccino, clearly he doesn't expect her to have the makings; he's just creating a situation in which she'll realize her unworthiness to have him as her paying guest. If Erich von Stroheim was the Man You Love to Hate, Bill Murray is the man we love to love while he's being hateful.

But this time Murray weights his tricks with a measure of not-so-comic rancor. In *Ghostbusters, Stripes*, and other Murray vehicles, this actor was our smartass proxy, and we cheered him for lancing pomposity and nerdiness. But in *Groundhog Day*, Phil Connors, like Scrooge (another Murray role), must be reformed.

A reformation takes the shape of Punxsutawney, Pa., where Phil, covering Groundhog Day celebration as a "color" story, is trapped by a blizzard whose very existence is an insult since he predicted it wouldn't happen. Furthermore, it keeps him in a town which seems to be the capital of Nerdity.

But that's not all. Some supernatural power has decreed that Phil will wake up in this town every morning of his life and it will always be February 2, Groundhog Day. He will have to reencounter the same bores and ineptitudes until...until Phil Connors Gets It Right. That is, until he both appreciates and improves Punxsutawney, his life will be literally unchangeable.

"Foster isn't really *enjoying himself. He's laughing at* life."

So this is *It's a Wonderful Life* in reverse. Instead of James Stewart learning to accept his past just as it is, we have Bill Murray learning that he won't have a future until he performs so virtuously that February 3 can finally dawn. Here is a man for whom each day is nothing but a rough draft.

Connors goes through four stages that are equally hilarious and are all acted to the hilt by Murray. First is the realization period in which Phil simply tries to understand what's happening. In this sequence the mere novelty and fantasy of the situation get laughs. But when Phil realizes that nothing he does is irrevocable and that all will be erased by 6 A.M., the movie turns into a sort of Middle-American *Faust* and Murray shifts into high gear, stuffing himself with massive amounts of high-cholesterol food, driving recklessly, and gathering information about beautiful women which he will use the next day to pick them up.

Small-town *Faust* becomes a farcical *No Exit* when Phil, despairing of ever escaping from his custom-made limbo, hurls himself off buildings and in front of speeding cars, only to wake up unscathed in his bed-and-breakfast to the strains of Sonny and Cher singing "I Got You, Babe" on his clock-radio. Finally, partly under the good influence of his first true love, played by Andie MacDowell with a directness that keeps her character from being smarmy, and partly out of sheer desperation, the heel becomes a hero to the town's citizens. And this last section, which might have been phonily poignant, stays dry and humorous as Connors turns into a schedule-driven, harassed Good Samaritan racing to keep his appointments with children falling out of trees and restaurant patrons in need of the Heimlich maneuver.

The brilliantly structured plot keeps *Groundhog Day* both taut and varied, but other elements contribute to its fun.

In this movie, economy of storytelling and filmmaking isn't merely of aid to comedy, it is sometimes the very source of humor. For instance, when the director Harold Ramis cuts from Phil making a *faux pas* in his seduction of MacDowell on one day to his slick moves on the very next, we laugh at the instant erasure of amorous ineptitude. If Ramis had inserted any transitional shot of Phil pondering his next step, the comedy would have been ruined.

Some of the humor derives entirely from Murray's performance. In an early attempt on MacDowell's virtue, Phil successfully feigns boyish ebullience while building a snowman and exchanging volleys of snowballs with local urchins. But when Phil, forced to reenact this scene, merely goes through the motions, shouting too enthusiastically and grinning too maniacally, like a bored actor trotting through the script of a long-running play, the young woman feels repelled and Connors loses again. It is Murray's acting alone that shows exactly what goes wrong since the two scenes are, of course, identically written.

Groundhog Day is a companionable movie and a rarity: a comedy done with a throwaway lightness of touch that your memory won't throw away. RICHARD ALLEVA

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1992 defeated in California
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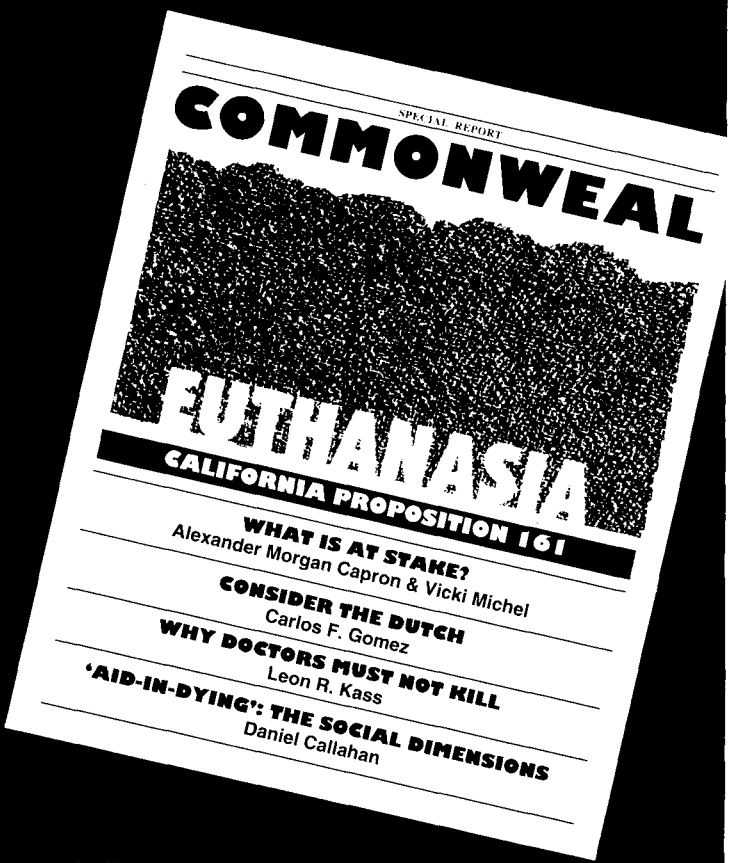
California's euthanasia proposition was described as "state of the art" legislation by its proponents. In COMMONWEAL's special supplement Alexander Morgan Capron, professor of law and medicine at the University of Southern California, and Vicki Michel, associate director of the university's Center for Health Policy and Ethics, analyze its language, criteria, and safeguards.



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The journey of Richard Rodriguez

ILAN STAVANS

It is a complex fate to be an American. James Baldwin liked to quote Henry James on the topic: "America's history, her aspirations, her peculiar triumphs, her even more peculiar defeats, and her position in the world—yesterday and today—are all so profoundly and stubbornly unique that the very word 'America' remains a new, almost completely undefined and extremely controversial proper noun. No one in the world seems to know exactly what it describes." The rise of multiculturalism, which perceives the melting pot as a soup of diverse and at times incompatible backgrounds, has made the word "America" even more troublesome, more evasive and abstract. Is America a compact whole, a unity? Is it a sum of ethnic groups unified by a single language and a handful of patriotic symbols? Or is it a Quixotic dream where total assimilation is impossible, and where multiculturalism leads to disintegration?

Baldwin's statement acquires a totally different connotation when one realizes that historically "America" is not only a nation but also a vast continent made up of many peoples and nations. From Alaska to the Argentine pampas, from Rio de Janeiro to East Los Angeles, the geography Christopher Columbus mistakenly encountered in 1492 and Amerigo Vespucci baptized a few years later, is also a linguistic and cultural multiplicity. America the nation and America the continent exist in a complex symbiosis. Thus, Latinos in the United States, some 22 million according to the 1990 census, encompass various subgroups that include Cubans, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans (who are twice American): as children of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and, also, as citizens of the so-called New World.

Books discussed in this essay

Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father, *Richard Rodriguez, Viking, $21, 230 pp.*

Hunger of Memory, *Richard Rodriguez, Bantam, $14.95, 208 pp.*

Richard Rodriguez, arguably the most visible and controversial Chicano intellectual, epitomizes their plight. Born in a white neighborhood in Sacramento in 1947, and an editor at the Pacific News Service in San Francisco, he is part Mexican and all U.S. citizen: twice American. Sociologists and politicians persist in seeing his ancestors as the newest wave of immigrants, second-class citizens at the bottom of the social hierarchy. But the truth is that Rodriguez's ancestors were in the territories north of the Rio Grande before the Mayflower Pilgrims. It was only after the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty signed in 1848, in which Generalísimo Antonio López de Santa Anna gave away and subsequently sold half of Mexico to the White House, that many of them unexpectedly, even unwillingly, became a part of an Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking reality.

A decade ago, at thirty-five, Rodriguez (spelled without the required Spanish accent) published his first book, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, an explosive autobiographical narrative detailing his humble beginnings in California, and how he was raised with expectations that led to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley and a dissertation on John Milton researched at the British Museum. His parents were first-generation immigrants from Mexico, thoroughly traditional in their Catholicism. Spanish, what Rodriguez calls "the private language," was used at home; English, the entrance door to the melting pot, prevailed in public places. He was sent to Catholic school where rigid Irish nuns oversaw his assimilation. His bilingual experience resembles that of Amy Tan, Eva Hoffman, and thousands of others. In this regard, *Hunger of Memory* was not the first U.S.-Hispanic memoir. A number of other remarkable personal narratives by Hispanics, many seasoned with fictional ingredients, opened up the field. In 1972, for example, Oscar "Zeta" Acosta, a Chicano lawyer and activist, wrote *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* in the style of Hunter Thompson's "gonzo journalism." And before Acosta there were Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy: The Story of a Boy's Acculturation*, actor Anthony Quinn's *The Original Sin*, singer Joan Baez's *Daybreak*, and Jesús Colón's *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches*.

Hunger of Memory, comprised of five separate essays, was an engaging analysis of the writer's journey from silence to voice, from anonymity to celebrity, from South to North. In it Rodriguez issued a vociferous personal attack against bilingual education and minority quotas as well as exploring his personal Catholicism and, although indirectly, his homosexuality. Before Linda Chavez and other neoconservatives, he attacked liberals for rejoicing in the promotion of blacks and Hispanics as "victims," and for allowing their guilt to shape affirmative-action programs. He argued vehemently, for example, that requiring Spanish instruction in the classroom is dangerous because it creates an abyss—a sense of separateness between the student and mainstream America.

A true *agent provocateur*, Rodriguez's

ILAN STAVANS, *a Mexican essayist, is the author of* Imagining Columbus: The Literary Voyage *(Twayne).*

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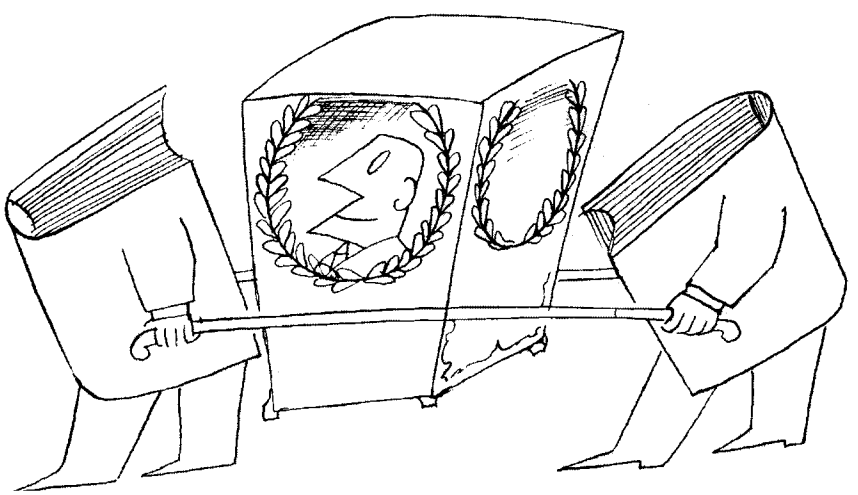
first book, already a minor classic, became a favorite target of attack for student activists and politically correct university professors, who sometimes seemed eager to demonize the writer. But the truth is, as Rubén Martínez and other critics have perceived, that Rodriguez is not any sort of right-winger. Political analysis is neither his interest nor his strength. Rather he is offended when his writing is used for the partisan endorsement of government programs, and he responds accordingly. He gets even angrier when his work is exploited for ideological reasons. In interviews and articles, he has described the book as another *Labyrinth of Solitude*, the groundbreaking study of the Hispanic psyche published in 1950 by the Mexican essayist Octavio Paz. But I find this characterization incomplete. Rodriguez's voice is alienated, anti-Romantic, often profoundly sad. While Paz embarks on an archeology of the Hispanic cultural idiosyncracy, Rodriguez is strictly personal. He does not offer historical analysis so much as meditative and speculative autobiography—a Whitmanesque "song of myself," a celebration of individuality and valor in which, against all stereotypes, a Mexican-American becomes a winner.

Unfortunately, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father*, meant as a sequel to *Hunger*, is a disappointment. Rodriguez's Mexican father perceived the world to be a sad place; as a child, his son saw it as a *fiesta*. Adulthood, however, has taught Rodriguez to reverse his childhood view. He now sees California, with a Hispanic population of over 7.5 million (34.4 percent of the state population), as a culture of comedy while Mexico personifies tragedy. In California the present lives; in Mexico history continues to count.

Like *Hunger, Days of Obligation* is a collection of essays. But this new volume lacks the coherence of the first book. The recurring themes—AIDS, barbarism vs. civilization among Hispanics, religion—are developed independently. "Late Victorians," the third essay, examines Rodriguez's circumspect homosexuality. "The Latin American Novel," a misleading title, is a study about the impact and value of both Catholicism and Protestantism south of the Rio Grande and among the Chicano population in California. Rodriguez talks to a number of Anglos and South Americans who see Jesus Christ as the embodiment of the centuries-old suffering collectively endured since the arrival of the *conquistadores*. Yet he ponders the impact of Protestant missionaries who are succeeding in converting poor, Spanish-speaking believers (there are some 50 million Protestants from Mexico to Argentina), seeing in it a sign of Catholicism's unadaptability and fragile standing in modern times. As a believer who regularly attends Sunday Mass, his analysis offers powerful insights into traditional Catholic symbols. "Catholicism," says Rodriguez, "may be administered by embarrassed, celibate men, but the institution of Catholicism is voluptuous, feminine, sure. The church is our mother; the church is our bride." He thanks the church for the schooling he received—his views of life, death, sex, and happiness—and yet, throughout the years not only has he lost the strength in his faith but he foresees immediate crisis for the church. "Should a Mass in San Francisco be performed in Spanish?" he wonders. English, after all, is this nation's "unofficial" official language. Will multilingualism eventually divide the church? Unfortunately, he never gives solid answers to these questions.

"The Head of Joaquín Murrieta" is the most engaging and powerful essay. It studies a well-known legend of a nineteenth-century, Mexico-born *bandido* in Fresno County. Murrieta was an outlaw, a kind of Robin Hood who fought the Anglo establishment out of grief and outrage, giving money and happiness to the poor and dispossessed. His death, like that of Pancho Villa, has been turned into legend. During the Gold Rush, Murrieta, from Sonora, Mexico, traveled to California with his brother, wife, and probably other relatives and friends. His fate remains obscure. Apparently, a bunch of drunken Anglos raped his wife, tortured him, and hanged his brother. During the next few years, disguised as an old man, an Indian, or what have you, he searched for every one of his torturers and killed them. The American authorities placed a bounty on his head. He turned into a vengeful criminal, a symbol of the Chicano animosity against the English-speaking establishment.

Murrieta has metamorphosized into a hero among Chicanos. He often acquires different citizenships and identities: Pablo Neruda, for instance, the 1967 Nobel Prize winner, portrayed him as a Chilean in a poem. Rodriguez's obsession is with Murrieta's bounty-branded head—according to rumors it was returned to the United States by state troopers for reward money. Where is it? Who has it? The author of *Days of Obligation* comes across a Chicano academic and priest, Alberto Huerta, who is anxious to find it in order to bury it with dignity as a gesture of reconciliation. As Huerta puts it: "All of us need to face our guilts and fears, if we are to become reconciled with one another." Turned into detectives, the writer and Huerta follow one clue after another until they eventually meet a curious antiquarian who claims that the deformed and monstrous head he keeps hidden is that of Murrieta.



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In imaginatively exploring the life of such a myth, Rodriguez comes to see the Rio Grande as a psychic injury dividing the idiosyncrasies of Mexico and the United States. Murrieta is an emblem, a symbol of divergence, part American and part Mexican. Unfortunately, this image, much like others in the book, lacks sufficient historical and cultural weight. The reader finds insightful comments that explain the tension between these two countries described by Alan Riding as "distant neighbors," but never an overall perspective that truly penetrates history. The results are fragmentary.

Shortcomings aside, Rodriguez is an extraordinary writer and a man of polarities—a chameleon, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of sorts who considers himself first a *gringo* and then a Mexican. Such divided loyalties remind me of Saul Bellow's cultural allegiances. His craftsmanship as an essayist, the artful playing of ideas and incidents, although in the spirit of Montaigne and John Stuart Mill, fits well the American tradition of transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson and twentieth-century masters like Mary McCarthy. Inevitably, his contribution stands next to James Baldwin's legacy, perhaps because the two have so much in common: their homosexuality, their deeply felt voyage from the periphery of culture to center stage, their strong religiosity and sense of sacredness. Rodriguez is a brilliant actor: without sentimentality or fear, he plays the part with great subtlety and intelligence. He is the embodiment of that complex fate shared by those born twice American: hybrids always living in the hyphen, with one leg here and the other across the Rio Grande. □

BOOKS

Outsider among the Maya

THE HEART OF THE SKY
Travels Among the Maya
Peter Canby
HarperCollins, $25, 350 pp.

Nancy M. Haegel

Utatlán is a Maya archaeological site located in the Guatemalan highlands. I was there on October 12, 1992, when hundreds of Maya descendants gathered for their own religious and political commemoration of Columbus's Quincentennial, an event marking what many view as the beginning of a five-hundred-year assault on their culture. Dressed in colorful *traje* (traditional clothing), with young children at their sides, people burned incense, hoisted protest banners and celebrated their traditions. Amid the archaeological ruins of their ancestors, the celebration proclaimed resistance and survival.

Having recently been to Guatemala, I had a special interest in Peter Canby's *The Heart of the Sky*, which describes three years of travel among Maya communities in southern Mexico and Central America. There are approximately 7 million Maya descendants today, speaking some thirty distinct languages and spread from the Yucatán to Guatemala, from the Chiapas highlands to Honduras. Canby covered the entire region, and his journey brought him into contact not only with the Maya, but also with many noted scholars who have, in recent years, made major breakthroughs in our understanding of pre-Columbian Maya history. History is the key word here, because, as Canby repeatedly shows, most of us know even less of the modern Maya.

The title, *The Heart of the Sky*, comes from "the name of the god" in the Popal Vuh, a colonial era manuscript describing the Maya creation story. This manuscript, which may have been translated from older hieroglyphic texts, is one of the few written links to the only civilization in the Americas known to have developed its own writing. Spanish friars burned hieroglyphic books when they found them, considering them a key link in the chain of Indian tradition they were committed to break. Now, five hundred years later, scholars from these same Western traditions work painstakingly to decipher the meaning of remaining hieroglyphs and to reconstruct the story of the Maya society which flourished in Meso-America between A.D. 200 and 800.

There is a tendency to think the culture of the Maya peaked there and, as Canby

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writes, "view the contemporary Maya as being in the process of absorption by the outside world." Canby's longstanding interest in the Maya leads him to a different view. "If one looks at the Maya as a colonized people who have retained their identity by continually adjusting their institutions to meet the demands of the outside world, their culture can be regarded as a vital and even expanding one." It is with this perspective that Canby travels and then weaves together the story of Maya past, present, and future.

The book is a collection of adventures, observations, and conversations, marked equally with insight and frustration. In remote villages, buses don't come and rainstorms do. Some Maya welcome Canby to their homes, while others try to take his money. He drops into caves and hikes through the Lacandón forest. Along the way, he talks with Maya village leaders, a government informer, religious principals, and, with a final and by now not unexpected irony, has breakfast in McDonald's with the only Maya Ph.D. in Guatemala.

What makes Canby's book more than an accounting of visits to exotic people and places is that he does not hesitate to ask questions, ranging from the hard to the naive, about the full range of Maya experience. This includes overt racism, an economic system that has forced indigenous people into subsistence work, and political repression in Guatemala that has brought a high degree of militarization to traditional Maya communities.

Canby is reluctant upon his initial ventures into Guatemala, "since being labeled a subversive in Guatemala is the equivalent of getting a death sentence, and since talking to an Indian might, under the wrong circumstances, be construed as subversive." With over half the modern Maya living in Guatemala, there are many people to talk to and much to learn. It is estimated that tens of thousands of Indians were murdered in counterinsurgency actions there in the early eighties, a reality brought again to the world's attention with the awarding of last year's Nobel Peace Prize to Quiché leader Rigoberto Menchú. Canby's conversations in refugee camps, "relocated" villages, and certain towns, such as Santiago Atitlán, site of a highly publicized massacre, are blanketed in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. It is no wonder that the questions sometimes ring hollow ("But why did the army begin the assassinations?" "Are the refugees guerrilla supporters?") and the answers are guarded.

There are moments of stilted dialogue in the book and an occasional tendency to make cynical statements about very subtle things. Upon encountering two Catholic sisters dealing with malnutrition issues in an Indian village, Canby remarks "Perhaps because it was such a relief to find the Catholic church concerned with something beyond restricting people's reproductive rights, I told the nuns how happy I was to see them in a region too full of evangelicals." This particular swipe at the church is a North American statement, but even in his encounters with native religion, Canby doesn't attempt to suspend or conceal his own skepticism.

But these minor slips of discipline are rare. Canby's most honest writing occurs when the day has been too long and the "gringo" has been unwelcome, or when the guides get lost in the forest and food is running out. He reveals then the emotions that come when the world and everyone in it appear indifferent, if not downright hostile to one's fate. It is in these moments that he seems to come closest to the experience of those who have found the dominant culture hostile to their own for the past five centuries. Yet Canby knows and is ever reminded of his outsider status. At one point, in the Chiapas highlands to witness a carnival celebration, he follows the costumed figures dancing through the streets. He drinks three shots of *pox*, the local moonshine, and is soon exchanging words in Tzotzil, the local language. For a brief moment, the whole world looks different. But the experience is fleeting. The dancers move on and Canby recalls, "I wanted to catch up with them, but it suddenly struck me as futile. I belonged, inevitably, to another world."

Most of us do and that is precisely what the book is about. Peter Canby's invitation to travel with him is well worth accepting, though nothing can ever substitute for one's own journey. One of the Maya women that Canby meets finally bids him and his notebook farewell with that same thought:

"'Another thing,' she said. 'You can't always be writing. There are things you can only learn from living with the people, things you can only learn in your heart.'"

The Heart of the Sky reminds readers that we have been living with the Maya people for five hundred years and still have much to learn. □

A DIVERSE PEOPLE

LATINOS
A Biography of the People
Earl Shorris
Norton, $25, 520 pp.

Edward L. Cleary

Recent changes in Washington have brought new prominence to Latinos and the weight they bring into national politics. The Hispanic vote contributed to the election of President Bill Clinton, two talented Latinos, Federico F. Pena and Henry G. Cisneros, joined the Clinton cabinet, and a notable increase of persons from Spanish-speaking backgrounds assumed seats in the House of Representatives.

But Hispanics expressed disappointment about not having Hispanics in the Senate or the Supreme Court and fewer numbers than would be representative in subcabinet positions. Earl Shorris's book explains why Hispanic gains in public life have been so difficult. He points to the underlying divisions in the Hispanic community and to the consequent lack of a coherent Hispanic agenda. Shorris pic-

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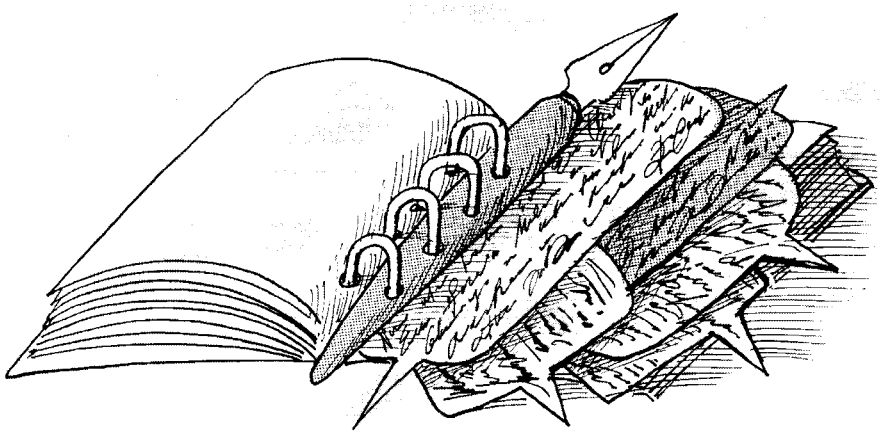

tures in vivid detail the great diversity among Hispanics. After reading this book, some may never again feel comfortable using Latino or Hispanic when interacting with *Puertorriqueños* or twelfth-generation New Mexicans.

This is a daring book. In his bravado Shorris often succeeds brilliantly. When he fails it is always passionately. (Shorris, a non-Hispanic, grew up in Texas with Hispanics has and is married to a Latina.) The successes make the book important for showing non-Hispanics what Hispanics hold dear and Hispanics what crucial differences of experiences exist among themselves. We expect no one to confuse Irish with British, and one hopes that after delving into this book, sophistication about Hispanic categories will also prevail.

Further, Shorris reminds us that Hispanics preceded most Anglo groups in the foundation of this country. *Latinos* also captures the historical evolution from Spanish and Indian to *mestizo*, and the creation of irreducible mestizo cultures. In Shorris's view an important segment of Hispanics maintained Spanish language and cultural traits for generations. More, they have a right to do so. Latinos will shortly become the largest ethnic group in America and will form one-half of those who identify themselves as Catholics. Hispanics have the capacity of enlivening the country and the church with values that enhance the evangelization of American culture. That, at least, is the hope of Allan Figueroa Deck, Virgilio Elizondo, and many other Hispanic leaders.

Shorris also discusses the distance between many Hispanics and the Catholic church. As sociologists Joseph Fitzpatrick and Andrew Greeley have argued, Shorris says that until Hispanics are ministered to by their own children there will be a measure of estrangement from their church. And he shows well the process of attraction to Pentecostal and other churches.

In treating religion, however, the author misses a central contribution of Hispanics to the Catholic church. Hispanic leaders, bishops, priests, and lay, resisted actively and passively the rules of the game that demanded they be assimilated, with no special treatment, within the church. Following three national *encuentros* these leaders persuaded the American hierarchy to issue a pastoral letter on Hispanics (1983) and a National Pastoral Plan for Hispanics (1987). The great victory Hispanics achieved is the recognition by the church that Hispanics have a right to use their language and their culture in the U.S. church. Thus the norm changed to integration, not assimilation. Bishop Ricardo Ramirez and others believe the Hispanic pastoral letter is one of the five great letters of the American episcopacy.

Although the skills of Shorris, a veteran journalist and novelist, bring great descriptive power to the book through extraordinary attention to details, the same skills disappear when he resorts to stereotypes. His unfortunate ethnic categorizing of Puerto Ricans marked by nostalgia and suffering the indignities of life or of Cubans as being fanatics overlook wide class, age, and personal differences. Puerto Ricans live comfortably in New Jersey or the District of Columbia suburbs as professionals working for the government as well as suffering in the worst sections of New York. Cuban-Americans include those who have made large sections of Miami into a youthful city with hard work, dancing, and food as well as the older persons suffering exile, with their toes pointed toward Havana.

Some of the philosophical musings are truly amazing. "Spanish is not a good language to be spoken by women; only a man with a deep voice can roll the Rs with courage." This would not be agreed to by Cuban men whose voices reach levels only dogs can hear or to Spanish-song aficionados hearing Domingo or Carreras. Or, a little earlier: "The subjunctive has no memory." These overwrought musings and many others are like the opinionated lapses of a guide on a bus tour or happy-hour talk, jarring and not well integrated into the train of thought of a 520-page book.

In a brief promotional blurb, Jonathan Kozol noted that this is a sad book. It is, unnecessarily. The progress Hispanics/Latinos/Spanish-speaking have made is impressive and cause for some celebration. Celebratory was the mood among Hispanics who vied for places at Clinton's Hispanic Inaugural Gala. Along with Clinton's victory, the children of Columbus were celebrating their own place in U.S. society.

This book could be read with *Strangers and Aliens No More*, a first-rate summary of the research on Hispanics issued recently by the Office of Research of the U.S. Catholic Conference and with the new *Latino National Political Survey*. Many Hispanics register therein their loyalty to the church, their pride in the United States, and their expectations for an improved economic condition. And we, like Shorris, will hope for a second overview by a Latino/a. □

REVIEWERS

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ENGLISH MUSIC
Peter Ackroyd
Alfred A. Knopf, Jr., $23, 400 pp.

Edward T. Wheeler

How in this postmodern age can any novelist compose a "sublime romantic allegory" and not wither in an ironic rejection? Peter Ackroyd offers a solution to this problem in *English Music*. His success depends upon an assessment of the sublime he invokes and of his fictional frame. The muse here is Blake whose words "Not one Moment of Time is lost" are the keys to redemption in this very religious work. The God worshiped is the Imagination and its Incarnation, as in Blake, is Albion, also named, English Music. This is really two books, a first-person narrative by one Timothy Harcombe, and a third-person account of Timothy's "dreams." The relationship between the two is ironic in the dramatic sense: Timothy appears to know less about the significance of his dreams than the reader—that is, a reader who is suitably equipped with a degree in English literature and a good reference library. And here is the thin edge of the postmodern wedge: the dramatic irony works to allow the reader a privileged position, an author's understanding of Tim's vision as the work of a medium, a channel. We watch and read as the character is written by *the* English Music, that is the Great Tradition of the English Imagination in its fullest sense—beyond T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis.

To what end? Tim offers his story and the dreams offer themselves as the timeless in time. The novel will have no end, just the circle turning in tune with the heavenly music of English muses, to the rhythms of English music and poetry and art and season and landscape and heritage. The movement of the narrative line tells us that only Blake's absolute of Art offers consolation in the vale of tears which is life and which cycles and intersects as the "material" with the "real." Yet, ironically, the novel has this all as dream, more like the circus illusions which Tim, as his father before him, produces for gainful employment.

So clever a writer as Ackroyd has to beware of self-indulgence. He can reproduce the syntax, diction, and cadences of any author or period effortlessly and he clearly is having a great deal of fun. In the no-time of Tim's dreams the Pilgrim Christian walks through Alice's looking glass, William Byrd gives a composition lesson in good Jacobean prose, and William Blake's prophetic line recites in its distinctive prophetic form a genealogy of English writers. There are conundrums posed throughout: an alter-Sherlock Holmes tells Tim in a dream that his author is Tim's father:

> "He sees us changed, too. At this precise moment he is seeing us as if we were in a vision." The detective was very grim. "He has been imagining my adventures. It is he who has been writing them down. Don't you understand now? He is the author of my being. And of yours also...he is bringing us to life even now. He is dreaming of us both."

The book is compulsive: every reference work on my shelves was open in allusion hunting. Sometimes the results of this sublime consolation are effective: the Byrd section has a central position and by theme and approximation to the title absorbs the author's great energy. But too often the process approaches the mechanical—Blake's Daughters of Memory and not of Inspiration preside. We have in fact the same problem which dogs whole sections of Blake's prophetic books—catalogues which fill out rather than compel. The finger test tells the true tale: pages get riffled to find out how many remain until the end of a section.

English Music does cause a form of recognition: How many of us have longed to live in the State of English Literature? Ackroyd has all the necessary requirements for citizenship or at least residence. And he is stunning in his ventriloquism even as he makes his Timothy a circus performer and a thrower of voices. The passages that do remind us of the consolations of the English Music are many. Yet as good a guide as Ackroyd might be in taking us into the Great Tradition, the originals have the better claim for our appreciation. Too often *English Music* is about doing things with words and not with what the words do. The effect is rather like reading the documentation for an elaborate piece of software called Divine Imagination.

This is not to say that Tim's narrative lacks interest. His struggles with his father, Clement, reverberate in a well-realized world, that of London in the twenties and thirties. Even though the cast of characters wear allegorical coats (e.g., dead mother = Cecilia = patron of music), they do act as real fictions. The "alert reader," so invoked by Mr. Ackroyd in his Acknowledgments, also knows that the allegory is at work everywhere. The divine magician can draw attention to the workings of his art too often and so fail to charm with his magic. I wish Ackroyd had succeeded better, had offered the cadences of English Music in a more enchanting form. □

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Atheists, saints & democrats

Lawrence S. Cunningham

It is always a boon to find a good volume in the flood of often quite embarrassing popular literature that passes for Christian spirituality. Michael Paul Gallagher's little book is such a volume. An Irish Jesuit who spent many years as a university professor of literature, Gallagher offers us some examples—framed with stories from his own experiences as a teacher and a missionary in Latin America—of how he deals with those who come to him with deep problems of faith and practice. This is not an apologetic work in which Father has all the answers to all the stock questions. It is, rather, a series of examples in which he tried to puzzle out, along with those who question him, some approaches to the life of faith and prayer.

I am not sure that it is possible to take his *exempla* and turn them into strategies for us or others to use. What does seem useful is to adopt his stance: be a patient listener; realize that the problems of others are real problems; and assume a due modesty. When a young person reacts against a too religious upbringing he says, in effect, that maybe the person has had too much church and that "too much church" is a stumbling block (a *skandolon*—scandal) to genuine faith. Ditto with prayer: try listening instead of saying; think of genuine prayer as the willingness or openness to pray.

Losing God, *by Michael Paul Gallagher, Twenty-Third Publications, $7.95, 127 pp.*

The simplicity and straightforwardness of Gallagher's prose should not beguile us into thinking that he has written a "simple" book. Alert readers will detect a counselor who has absorbed Ignatian principles (directly and through Rahner and Lonergan, I suspect) and a sapiential reading of the Scriptures at a deep level. What he can do is communicate and turn what appears to be abstruse doctrine into lived experience. In one place, for example, he brings a young woman to a sense of trinitarian prayer by simply noting that genuine prayer is prayer to God *above* us and *beside* us and *within* us. Like many things in this very good little book, that is nicely said. For that reason I used some of its ideas for conferences I recently gave to a sabbatical program for clergy and then circulated the work for their more leisurely perusal.

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs Notre Dame University's theology department.*

The Way of a Pilgrim is a nineteenth-century Russian classic of spirituality. The unknown author recounts his wanderings through prerevolutionary Russia as he learns and practices the "unceasing prayer" that is such a hallmark of Orthodox spirituality. Armed only with a Bible and a copy of the classical anthology of Orthodox spirituality, the *Philokalia,* the author recounts his encounters with monks, intellectuals, peasants, convicts, exiles, foreigners, hermits, and farmers as he moves through the vast Russian landscape interiorizing his ceaseless prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner." Although he never made good his intention to get to the Holy Land—a favored destination of the Russian pilgrim—he seems to have covered vast distances.

The Way of a Pilgrim, *translated by Helen Bacovcin, Doubleday Image, $8, 196 pp.*

My original copy of this book is about thirty years old so it pleased me no end to get this translation (first done in the 1970s) in a serviceable format and at a reasonable price in the esteemed series of Image Books from Doubleday. Anyone who desires to enter the world of Russian spirituality would do well to read this work. It is a classic for even those who are disinclined to practice its discipline. Its shining sense of Christ, its predilection for the hidden life of poverty, watchfulness, conversion, and solitude is a good antidote for those who only know the more splendorous version of Russian piety reflected in onion domes, icons, and gorgeously sonorous liturgies. There is something almost Dostoevskian about the tone of this little classic and it gave me immense pleasure to reread a book I have known for many years.

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, *by Richard J. Foster, HarperSan Francisco, $17, 276 pp.*

Foster is a Quaker who is gaining a fine reputation as a spiritual writer. His current book seeks to *name* the experience of prayer so as to aid us in disentangling what is authentic in that exercise and what is illusory. The single chapters borrow from the classic "types" of prayer (e.g., simple, sacramental, meditative, etc.) and interweave description and the experience of himself and others. The result of all of this is an extremely readable and non-technical work of devotion in the best sense of the term.

The range of prayer experiences which

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Foster treats is quite broad but there is no hint that he feels that this or that approach to prayer is *the* approach. He is especially good at describing the intersection of ordinary life and prayer in chapters like that on the prayer of the forsaken where, in undramatic but realistic terms, he talks about prayer and doubt.

I made good use of this fine little book in preparing talks and conferences but those not so employed would also find it useful for straight spiritual reading. It would rank high, in my judgment, as a book to be worked through during Lent or when on retreat.

What has always fascinated me about Ignatius of Loyola is how he recapitulated in his life so many of the models that one finds in the history of the Christian tradition. He spiritualized his original career of soldier/courtier via a period of being a hermit and a pilgrim before going on to being a scholar and religious founder. He lived at a time of intense turmoil (Ignatius was a contemporary of Luther) and, especially in his native Spain, was the subject of the attentions of the Inquisition on more than one occasion.

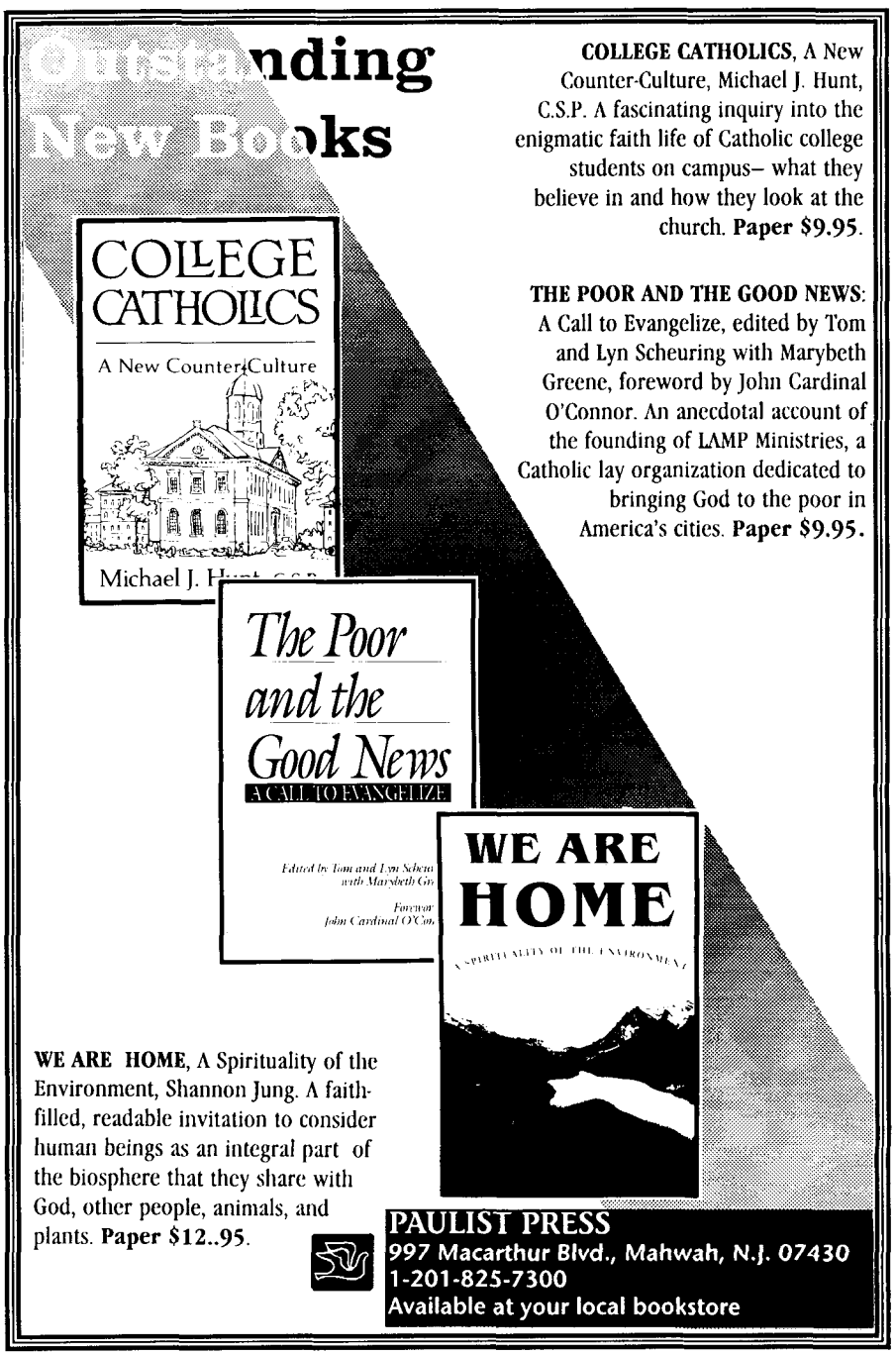
Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint, *by W. W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., Yale University Press, $35, 480 pp.*

When Ignatius finally settled in Rome, his mature years were spent in a small house from which issued directives and letters as he shaped his religious order, later known as the Jesuits. It was a trying life spent in fending off at least one hostile pontiff, chatting up aristocratic ladies, ordering about wayward clerics, and generally attempting to keep his ever growing society intact. The basic glue holding the society together was the shared experiences of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a book of seeming banality when read but of revolutionary potential when lived.

Meissner tells this story with great verve and, equally, with an impressive command of the published literature. Meissner's biographical narrative is followed by a section on Loyola as a mystic and, finally, a psychoanalytic portrait of the saint. The latter section should come as no surprise since the author is both a Jesuit priest and a practicing Freudian analyst.

The biography is wonderfully written. The psychoanalytical portrait will be judged differently by those sympathetic to such an approach or those, like myself, who read such stuff with a slightly arched eyebrow of suspicion. Luckily, Meissner gives fair warning when the Freudian reflections begin which allows the eye to skim until one is back on *terra firma*. In general, I judge this a wonderful biography and even when Meissner turns to Freud I discovered myself at places saying what Newman is supposed to have said when he read the skeptic Hume as a young man: "How awful! How plausible!"

Wilkes's book is a reprint of a longish 1991 profile that he did of Archbishop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Rembert Weakland, O.S.B., for the *New Yorker*. I read that profile and, if memory serves me, nothing in the current text adds to what was written there. The book's subtitle ("Travels with Rembert Weakland") reflects the organization of the work: a section on Weakland at home in his diocese; at the annual meeting of bishops in Washington; and on a journey to El Salvador.

The Education of an Archbishop, *by Paul Wilkes, Orbis, $13.95, 147 pp.*

Weakland is for many (but as Wilkes makes clear, not all) the ideal bishop. A polyglot musician with profound roots in the best of the Catholic tradition (he is a monk who once served as primate of the Benedictines) his story is of a man who is whipsawed between his own instincts for dialogue and the demands of bishops to march to a centralized tune of Roman obedience. If there was ever a case study of competing ecclesiologies seen through the lens of a single person, this is it. Weakland's profile pictures a person who listens to people; tries to tell the truth as he sees it; and seems unafraid of the future facing the postconciliar church.

Rome does not like his style nor his independence. That shows up in the veto they exercised over an honorary doctorate from a pontifical faculty in Fribourg; in the exchange of letters with Rome over priestless parishes; and his own feeling that nominating potential bishops is a bootless exercise because Rome does not really heed advice. Wilkes chronicles all of this in an engagingly readable style. His conclusion is that Weakland will never leave Milwaukee for "bigger things." Lucky Milwaukee.

John Coleman's essay in the Bianchi/Ruether anthology strikes me as a compellingly sane statement: that a nondemocratic church should attempt—and there is no paradox here—to estimate and act upon strategies for democratization within the church as we have it today. In the same vein (and quite correctly) Charles Curran appeals to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity to think about democratization in the church.

A Democratic Catholic Church: The Reconstruction of Roman Catholicism, *edited by Eugene C. Bianchi and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Crossroad, $23.95, 260 pp.*

Other authors would go further. To the dictum that the Catholic church is not democratic they respond: why not? Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza sees a possibility in tilting toward the New Testament *ekklesia* (assembly) as a counterbalance to the historically developed *kyriake* (church) which is patriarchially constituted on ancient sociopolitical models. Eugene Bianchi searches the tradition for more democratic models although his praise for Pachomian monasticism over against the Benedictine model strikes me as odd; Pachomian monasteries seem to me to have been little more than pious pressgangs while Benedictine monasticism has a strong democratic mechanism built into its ethos.

What is best in this wildly uneven anthology (e.g., do we need a reprint of a 1969 essay by Hans Küng?) is the sheer quantity of data that are provided about attempts at democratization in the church. Rosemary Ruether's survey of five movements of concerned feminists in this country that attempt to live within the broad parameters of the church while being independent of the hierarchy is just interesting to know about, whatever the long-term prospects of such experiments might be. Phil Berryman's sober assessment of the current state of base communities in Latin America is worth the price of the book and serves as a cautionary tale for those who are overly enthused about such communities.

What this collection lacks, however, is a separate substantive essay to point out the problems of democratization. Does a democratic ecclesial polity translate into a more prophetic church? The recent ex-

The viciousness of the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is almost impossible to imagine. Since fighting began in 1991, hundreds of thousands of people — many of them innocent women and children — have been traumatized by the horrors of "ethnic cleansing." Millions more are now homeless and in desperate need of aid.

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perience of the Southern Baptists, with the tyranny of the majority, would suggest not. Does the system of lay trustees (ably described by Jay Dolan) also teach us a negative lesson? I know of one such holdover in the South where trustees, within living memory, resisted the presence of African Americans in its church despite the wishes of the pastor who was, in essence, powerless over the trustees. And, finally, how does one balance a need for some kind of unity between the churches and the Great Church that does justice to local needs while not falling into sectarianism? The writers in this book give us much material as we think through those very tough issues but they tend not to face such challenges head on.

Salt, Leaven & Light: The Community Called Church, *by T. Howland Sanks, Crossroad, $21.95, 251 pp.*

Sanks's new book describes the church from the perspective of theology. It comes to us from a person who teaches ecclesiology at the Jesuit School of Theology (Berkeley) and it reflects his long career in the classroom. After an introductory section on methodology, Sanks has a generous middle section which reflects on the development of the understanding of the church as it has evolved from the New Testament witness down to the present day. The final third of the book takes up a series of neuralgic issues which engage theologians: the reshaping of our understanding of ministry; the challenges posed by the theologies of liberation; the need for inculturation as we move toward what the late Karl Rahner has called the World Church; the character of the local church (by which he means the church in this country); and, finally, the relationship of the church *vis-à-vis* the great religions of the world.

The merits of this work are considerable: a capacity for clear presentation; a good historical sense; and a nice blend of both the hermeneutics of suspicion and of trust. As such, I think that this is a book which would make a good core text for a college/seminary course in ecclesiology or as a text for serious nonacademics and, as such, I can heartily recommend his work. This book has the mark of the good teacher all over it.

If I have a criticism (and it is a common one to which many books on ecclesiology are open) it is this: I would like to have seen more consideration given to the ecclesiologies developed in the Eastern church. I make that criticism not because I have any illusions about the superiority of Orthodox ecclesiology but because the witness of that church will become increasingly important as the situation changes in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the Eastern emphasis on viewing ecclesiology with respect to the liturgy and seeing it as an outgrowth of the central mysteries of Christ offer some openings for us in the West. □

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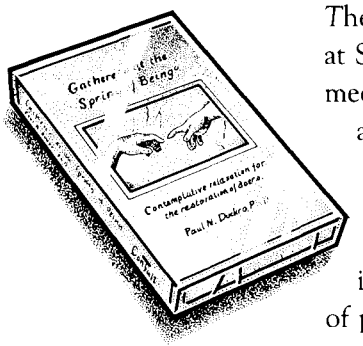

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

universities—Notre Dame, Georgetown, and Boston College—I can personally attest to the accuracy of his column. It is idle to repeat their lapses. It is enough to say that they uniformly decline to stand up and defend their secularity, but instead duck their heads and run away.

WILLIAM TALBOT

More spiritual than God

York, Pa.

To the Editors: Elizabeth A. Johnson's article ["A Theological Case for God-She," January 29] and Luke Timothy Johnson's laudatory review of her book [same issue], together with his much less favorable review of the collection of essays edited by A.F. Kimel, Jr., help to clarify how much is at stake in the feminist theological project.

Luke Johnson's language is moderate, his learning impressive, but at critical points he reveals how deeply the gospel is threatened by feminist theology and vice versa. His appeal to continuing revelation near the end of the section on Kimel's *Speaking the Christian God* is a prime example. While God does continue to lead his church, God's revelation is, in fact, very much a thing of the past, for it takes place in Israel and in Christ. Thus when we hear the appeal to "God's self-disclosure in the world," we should be on guard for an agenda that intends the compromise of that offensively specific and past-tense saving and revelatory action of God and its replacement by more amenable "self-disclosures."

Even more troubling is his endorsement as "thoroughly orthodox" of Elizabeth Johnson's Christology: "'Christ for us' is no longer the historical (male) Jesus, but rather the resurrected one, the cosmic Christ whose genderless Spirit touches and transforms both female and male lives." This is plainly not orthodox Christology but its perennial, precise, and, yes, gnostic opposite. The risen, cosmic Christ is the male, Jewish, wine-drinking, celibate, crucified apocalyptic prophet Jesus of Nazareth, who taught as of first importance and as liberating news to call God "Our Father," and who also in remarkable ways called women into a new community. For just such reasons Christianity's primal assertion is not about an indefinite cosmic Christ; it is "Jesus is Lord."

Feminist theology's trouble with this gospel is that like its kin it is more spiritual than God. It draws shrewdly on the apophatic tradition, while overlooking that that tradition is secondary to the external and positive proclamation of the gospel and administration of the sacraments. Having made this move, it invariably obscures the simple reality that the gospel announcement in Bible, dogma, liturgy, and tradition makes a host of positive assertions about God and Christ, which are proposed as true statements even as all speaking of the gospel recognizes the final inability of human words or reason to plumb the depth of the mystery.

The feminist project is religiously and spiritually sophisticated, but as Johnson and Johnson demonstrate, seemingly by accident, it is not anything like what the Bible and the catholic tradition mean by the gospel. The gospel is not our effort to approximate the mystery and to "image God" and it cannot endure the religious turn to the subject, of which feminist theology is merely the latest installment. The gospel is a saving word to mortal sinners, addressed to us from outside us, by a God who offensively took flesh in one time, one place, and one man. Human religiosity has struggled against that gospel from the time of the church at Corinth, which likewise claimed a bundle of fresh revelations.

(REV.) LEONARD R. KLEIN

The writer is senior pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in York, Pennsylvania.

A mystery beyond gender

Morristown, N.J.

To the Editors: Elizabeth A. Johnson's article leaves me with questions. If "theology has consistently acknowledged that God is Spirit and thus beyond gender identification," does it not muddy the consistent theological waters to foster an identification of God as female instead of pressing beyond gender in an attempt to shed new light on the mystery beyond gender?

When dealing with the parables in the gospel revelation, is it theologically precise to identify God with his kingdom or with tangential details in the parables?

Again, is it theologically sound to equate these same tangential and infrequent details in the parables with Jesus' consistent address to God as "father" and "*abba*"?

Does not this theological method remind one uncomfortably of John Garvey's description in the same issue of the theological method of Thomas Jefferson who, he says, "made Jesus relevant by removing from the Gospels anything which made Thomas Jefferson uncomfortable"?

THOMAS F. WALSH, S.J.

The author replies:

In many ways I share the concerns of these letter writers: God is holy mystery beyond gender; for Christians, ultimate trust is not placed in anything other than God's promise and saving work in Christ; a worthy relevance is not gained by removing uncomfortable aspects of the gospel.

Where we part company, it seems, is over the need for interpretation of the gospel as the community of believers moves through various historical eras and cultures. Leonard Klein makes the startling statement that the gospel cannot endure the religious turn to the subject. Thus it is not one aspect or other of my work or of Christian feminist theology that is the object of his criticism, but modernity itself.

In the early Christian centuries, some argued in similar fashion that the gospel could not survive the turn from a Jewish to a Hellenistic expression. In hindsight we see that if the gospel had *not* been preached in terms of Hellenistic culture, it would not have won the minds and hearts of most of the people in the then-known world. In fact, the very power of the gospel is revealed in its ability to keep pace with ongoing historical experience. For religions die when their lights fail, when they lose the power to connect people's current experience of the world with the ultimate mystery of God.

The very best of nineteenth- and twentieth-century theology, both Protestant

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and Catholic, has been engaged in executing modernity's turn to the subject and, by now, its corrective in postmodern categories. Without this restatement in contemporary terms, the gospel would not be audible to most thinking Westerners today. To claim that the gospel cannot endure the turn to the subject is, in my view, to underestimate the gospel.

Looking beyond this fundamental difference, I would like to offer several clarifications. My work does not deny that the crucified Jesus is risen as the Christ. In fact, it makes quite a point of this in terms of the challenge this presents to patriarchy. But it does insist on understanding Christ in a holistic, Pauline sense as head and members together. All who drink of the one Spirit are in Christ and are being transformed into the image of Christ.

Furthermore, I do not advocate subtracting male metaphors for God from the Scriptures. Rather, in the interest of inclusive language I search for biblical female metaphors and show how we can also use these to expand our treasury of language for God. In particular I make use of the wisdom tradition, often overlooked but found in Scripture, dogma, and liturgy, to make positive assertions about God and Christ. What makes this interesting, of course, is that Wisdom, quite central to New Testament Christology, is a female symbol and so challenges the overwhelming dominance of male terms in Christian usage.

It is my conviction that male imagery is in fact so dominant in our imaginations that only by increased use of female imagery can we restore the former to its suppleness as metaphor, rather than literal description, of God. Trying to honor the mystery of God beyond gender while the daily language of the church continues to use exclusively male images simply does not work. Nor does gender-free language for God honor women in their momentous spiritual struggle to claim their human dignity as created in the image of God.

Three truths are basic. God is mystery beyond all imagining, despite Pastor Klein's criticism of this apophatic stance. Speech about divine mystery, even the language of revelation, uses images and concepts drawn from the created excellences of this world. And we need many of these terms to offset and enrich one another. At this point, the burden of proof is on those who would deny that female symbols deserve a place in this treasury.

What Thomas Walsh describes as Jesus' consistent address to God as father does not undermine this argument. Biblical scholarship has shown that while Jesus did address God as "*abba*," a term rich with theological import, his use of the term was neither exclusive nor frequent. Word count shows that God is referred to as father in the Gospels with increasing frequency; 4 times in Mark, 15 in Luke, 49 in Matthew, and 109 in John. It is scarcely possible to dispute that here we see straightforward evidence of a burgeoning tradition in the early church rather than abundant use by the actual Jesus of history.

Finally, I note the absence of any positive suggestion in these letters as to how we should talk about God in light of the challenge of Christian feminism arising from the sufferings, achievements, and pastoral needs of believing women today, and in light of the search of women and men for a more just community shaped by relationships of mutuality. Jesus did call women into a new community, but his community was quick to assume the prevailing cultural form of male dominance. Exclusive God language both expresses and supports this. Now that the question has been raised, we are in a new situation with serious implications for the future. To carry on in the same vein as if nothing had happened would be, in my view, to fail in care for the good news.

ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON

B.C., A.D., yes; C.E., no

Seattle, Wash.

To the Editors: Late one evening, reading through your always excellent review section, I came across Luke Johnson's essay [January 29], and met a stumbling block in his reference to "Gnosticism in the second century C.E." [rather than "A.D."].

I realize that using "C.E." for "the common era" or "B.C.E." for "before the common era" is more irenic and broad-minded, perhaps even a sound ecumenical gesture. But is it possible that we are a bit rash in purchasing this new wine while discarding the old?

We can err by being either too narrow-minded or too broad-minded. *De facto*, the Incarnation is Christianity's central myth. For many centuries, three times a day, a most amazing and powerful phenomenon brought light and gracefulness to the Christian world. Church bells across Europe, in harmony with the passing sun, proclaimed that central mystery; Christians stopped the onrush of time and asserted in prayer the presence of God in our world by reciting the Angelus at sunrise, noon, and sundown.

History is a battlefield where myths ceaselessly engage in mortal combat. Today our Christian myth and symbols are locked in struggle with those of scientism, materialism, and secularism. To surrender "before Christ" and the more felicitous "in the year of our Lord"—terms that clearly assert what Christians consider an objective truth, that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the very center of the human story—may be ill-advised. The Incarnation is precisely the overturning of historical time as something common. To my way of thinking the usage "C.E." is regressive. "B.C." and "A.D." state a clear fact.

JACK MORRIS, S.J.

From the editors: Commonweal's *preference is for "B.C." and "A.D."; "C.E." slipped past our safeguards.*

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